

THE INDIA ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE AND AFTER

By

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in India*

With an Introduction by

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TO
THE RAJAH OF BOBBILI
AND
THE MAHARAJAH OF DARBHANGA
*Who ably represented the interests of
the Indian Zamindars
at
The India Round Table Conference*

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PREFACE

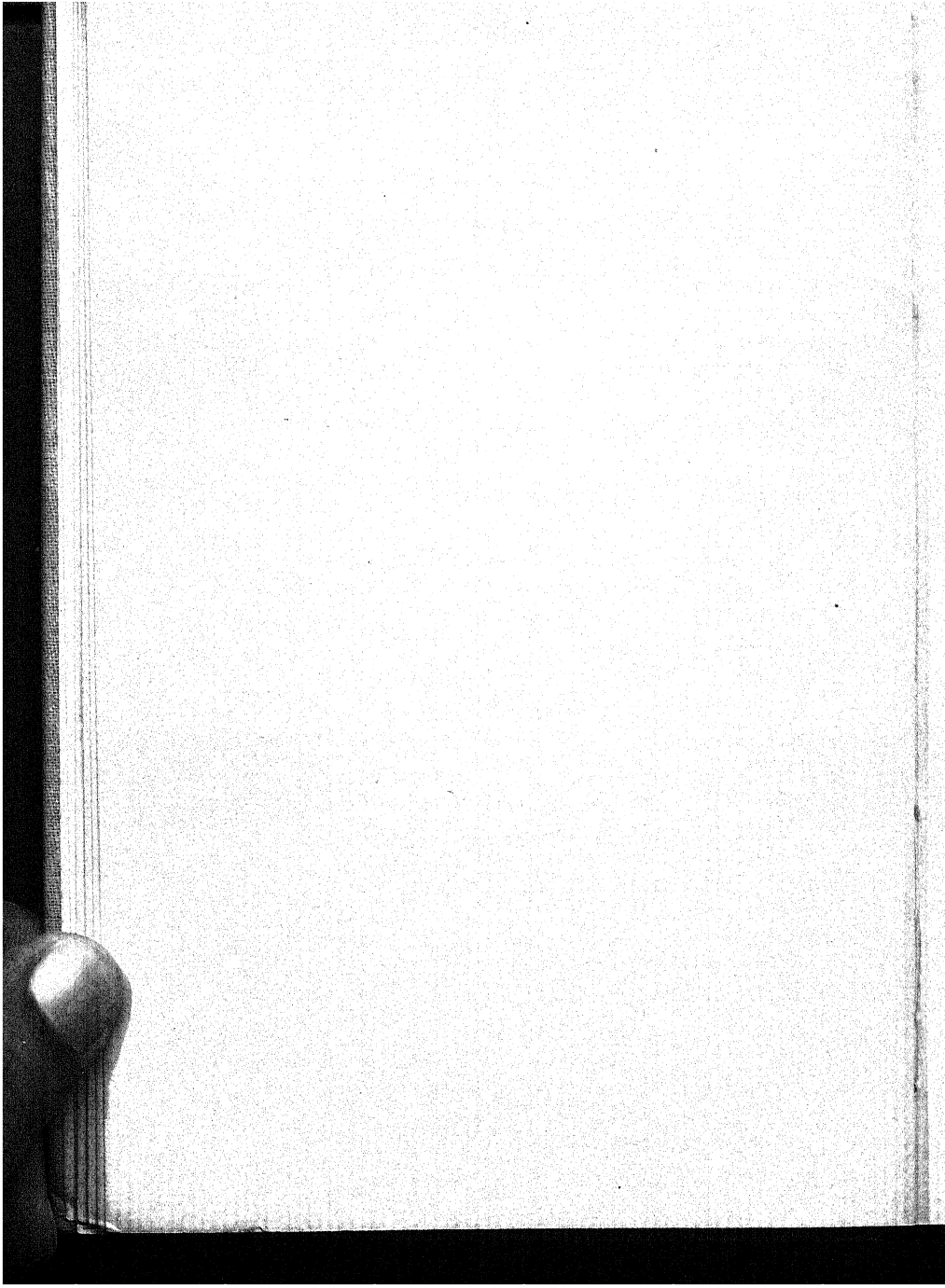
THE India Round Table Conference, the second session of which concluded on the 1st of December, 1931, in London, has drawn to it the public attention not only of Great Britain and India, but that of the whole world. This Conference has had about it a distinct individuality. It has marked a novel method of approach for the solution of an imperial problem. Indeed it has deserved the careful scrutiny of both British and Indian politicians and political theorists who are concerned with the future of the British Empire.

Therefore an attempt is made in the following pages to describe briefly the background on which the Conference rests, the problems it sought to solve, and the manner in which it accomplished the task set for itself. But other issues which have been germane to any such retrospective study of the India Round Table Conference have also been discussed at some length—with a view to enabling the reader to judge for himself how completely the Conference has failed to solve the Indian problem. Also in writing this book I have remembered what a brilliant critic stated while commenting on the Dawes Report, that history could not be written on a basis of documents alone, because not only do many of the most important developments turn on confidential and unofficial discussions, but the outcome of the whole series of negotiations is upon that basis inexplicable and indeed incredible.

I desire to express my grateful thanks to Mr. Edward Marjoribanks, M.P., for kindly consenting to write the introduction to this book, and to Mr. Ian D. Colvin for the trouble he has so kindly taken in revising the proofs.

D. MADHAVA RAO.

4, QUEEN STREET,
MAYFAIR, W.1
14th Jan., 1932.



INTRODUCTION

By EDWARD MARJORIBANKS, M.P.

THE writer of this introduction can do little to adorn this clear and succinct narrative except by way of introducing the writer to his readers. Coming from a Brahmin, and the son of an Indian High Court Judge, his opinion is as welcome as a ray of sunlight to those who have faith in the British Raj. The public is in need of a short summary of events in India from the beginning of Lord Irwin's Viceroyalty till to-day. This brief survey has the value of a well-arranged table of events quite apart from the colour which the author's bold and spirited interpretation has lent to them. Here is a young Indian, speaking in the clearest possible language and rebuking all the elder statesmen of Great Britain who have dealt with Indian affairs for the last seven years. He says in effect: "Oh ye of little faith in yourselves! Your doubts concerning your right to be in India are not justified. Your justification is and has always been the work you can do for India. Your fears are not justified. You yourselves have made Gandhi a dangerous man and Congress a dangerous institution. You can unmake them. There is urgent work for you to do in India now, as in the past, but you waste precious time when you should be doing real work, in framing impractical schemes not only rejected by the Princes but by all sensible opinion in British India. It is unthinkable that you can force such an unpractical and unpopular scheme as Lord Sankey's plan for Federation for India, as you threaten to do in your latest statement of

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Indian policy. It is time that you stopped making ambiguous declarations that deceive nobody but yourselves and building castles in the air and came down to earth once more to the more useful work of restoring and maintaining law and order in India. That is the first condition of future progress."

The author's theme is first a vivid criticism of Lord Irwin's Viceroyalty, to whom he attributes the paternity of the Round Table Conference, and secondly, a destructive analysis of the work done by the Conference itself at its two sessions. He says that the corner-stone of the idea of an all-India Federation, the approval of the Princes, given prematurely at the first session, crumbled entirely away at the second. All Lord Irwin's concessions and kindness have achieved nothing, unless perchance they have produced disillusion. For the Conference has failed, and Gandhi once more is in gaol. Much time and prestige have been lost and nothing gained except a richer knowledge of Gandhi's character.

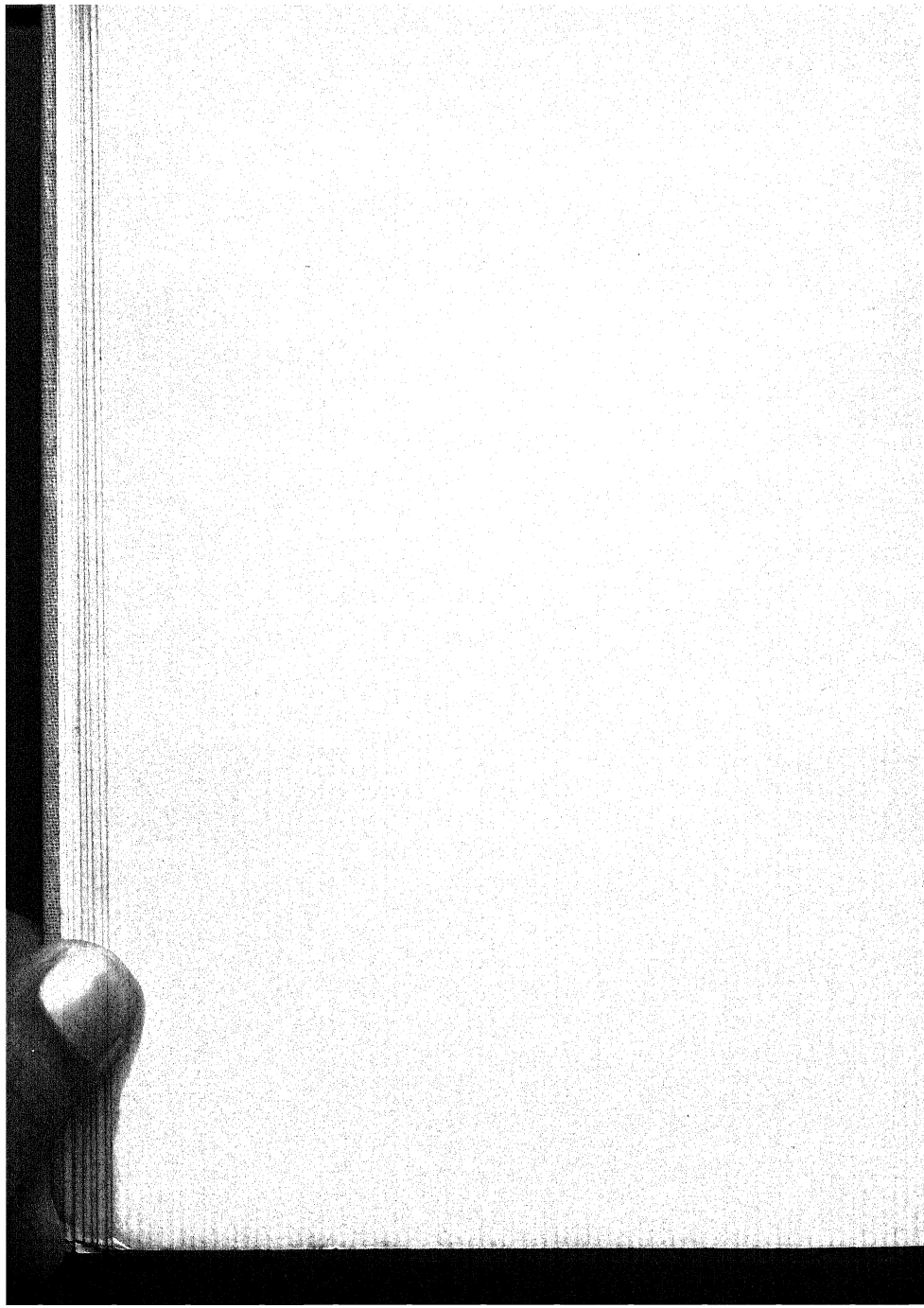
That all this comes from the pen of a young Indian increases the interest of a book which should stand on its own merits, especially at this time. For the publication is very opportune, coming as it does just when the Government of India is once more driven from conciliation to drastic coercion. In the lifetime of Mr. Madhava Rao and myself it is to be hoped that some of these Indian questions may reach a permanent solution. Yet our lifetime is but a half-hour in the history of India.

The Sahibs have set out on a perilous voyage. We are already in mountainous seas. The horizon is dark and menacing. We are told that we cannot turn about, and we have not yet decided on an ultimate destination or even a port of call. We weave legends as we go about a harbour named "Dominion Status"; but there is no such place.

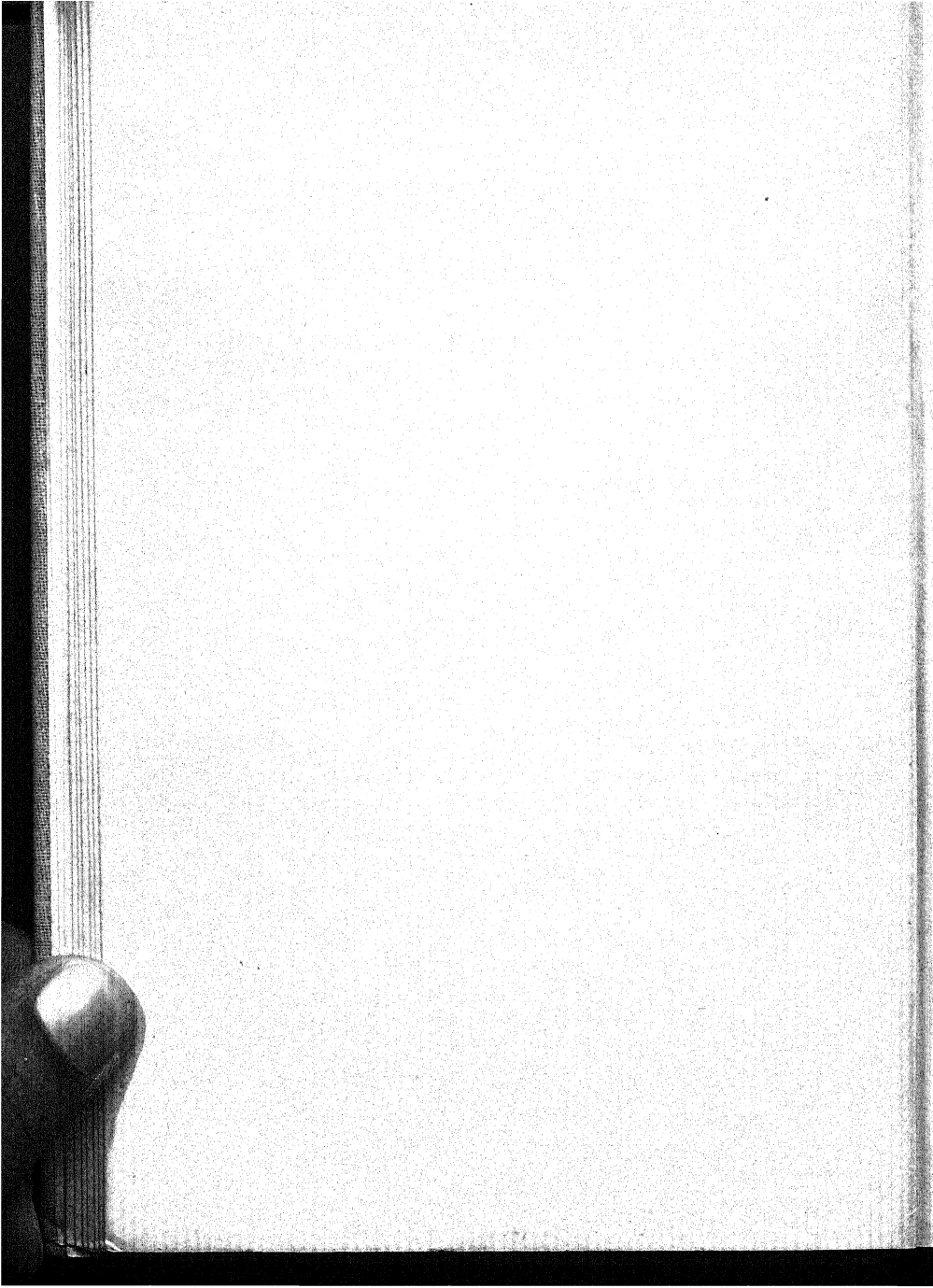
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Meanwhile a young Englishman salutes in friendship a young Indian, and in wishing him well hopes especially that the book of his will be widely read and gratefully appreciated both here and in India.

EDWARD MARJORIBANKS.



SECTION ONE



CHAPTER I

LORD IRWIN'S INITIATIVE

THE India Round Table Conference, the second session of which concluded on the 1st December, 1931, in London, has drawn the public attention not only of Great Britain and India but the world. This Conference has had a distinct individuality, has marked a novel method of approach to the solution of an imperial problem; and it has deserved the careful scrutiny of all who are concerned with the future of the British Empire.

This India Round Table Conference can be appreciated correctly in all its bearings only when one has come to understand clearly the historical background on which the Conference rests. The historical background itself is the policy Lord Irwin pursued with reference to the Simon Commission and the Indian National Congress during his five years of Indian Viceroyalty between April 1926 and April, 1931.

It would be helpful, therefore, to review briefly Lord Irwin's policy in India during these five years.

When Lord Irwin assumed the Viceroyalty in April, 1926, Calcutta, which although no longer the headquarters of the Indian Government, is still the foremost city in India, was enveloped in the flames of a fierce communal riot which lasted for several weeks. These Calcutta riots were only a pointer to the fierce communal rancour which always exists in India, and they impressed Lord Irwin, immediately after assuming his office, with the lesson that above everything else India needed communal harmony. He, therefore, set out to secure for India peace

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and concord, both between Hindus and Moslems and among other communities.

It was an endeavour which engendered for Lord Irwin among Indians a deep affection and reverence ; and Indian politicians began to extend to him a respect greater than had been shown to any previous Viceroy. Lord Irwin was looked upon as the greatest of Viceroys that had come to India ; he was compared to British statesmen like Sir Thomas Munro, Lord Ripon and Lord Hardinge, and was even thought to be greater than any of them. Political legends began to be woven around him. In all the Indian political clubs it came to be said that Lord Irwin was the special friend and confidant of Mr. Baldwin, and as such carried an influence far greater than even the then Secretary of State for India. Naturally Indian political leaders and their following, the Indian intelligentsia, came to believe that Lord Irwin was going to confer on the Indian dependency the status of a dominion.

This impression was supported by independent evidence. At that time in the Indian Legislative Assembly, which is the lower house of India's Parliament, Congress politicians who formed the Swarja party were in an influential majority, and some of India's foremost political leaders who had always preached extreme political doctrines, and who were working for the immediate attainment of complete self-government for India, were members of the Assembly.

Thus the late Pandit Motilal Nehru, Pandit Malaviya, S. Srinivasa Iyenger, the late Lala Lajpat Rai, and Mr. V. J. Patel, dominated the Assembly. Lord Irwin so far departed from the custom of his predecessors as to put them on an equality with himself and treat them as his political colleagues. Since no previous Viceroy had adopted to the Indian political leaders—who were in reality political agitators preaching political doctrines subversive to British interests—an attitude of equality and confidence, the Indian nationalist press came to trumpet Lord Irwin as India's greatest Viceroy, her staunchest friend—as one

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indeed who was destined to effect her political deliverance.

Lord Irwin, too, in view of his own philosophic temperament, appreciated the manner in which Indian political leaders came to regard him, and no doubt desired to cement with concrete achievement the hopes he had inspired in such leaders.

But these political friends and admirers came to the parting of the ways when Lord Irwin, under the directions of His Majesty's Government, announced from Delhi in the winter of 1927 the appointment of the Indian Statutory Commission presided over by Sir John Simon.

The Simon Commission was severely condemned by certain political sections in India; but more than any section the Indian Liberals were fierce in their condemnation. The Indian Liberal leaders, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, Mr. C. Y. Chintamani, and the Rt. Hon. Sranivasa Sastry, launched an intense propaganda of boycott of the Simon Commission, and this boycott was naturally supported by Congress politicians like the late Lala Lajpat Rai and the late Pandit Motilal Nehru. Even Mr. V. J. Patel, the President of the Indian Legislative Assembly, actively participated, despite all parliamentary traditions.

The boycott campaign against the Simon Commission spread very quickly, but was nevertheless artificial, and was not supported by the Moslem leaders, the leaders of the Justice Party in Southern India, and the important spokesmen of other influential minority communities. Lord Irwin, however, presumed that this boycott campaign had the entire support of every political section in India, possibly because he found that those Indian politicians, whom he had come to regard as his political colleagues, had all joined in the fray and were all shouting the then popular slogan, "Simon go back." With his sensitive mind and peculiar code of political obligation and personal loyalty, Lord Irwin exaggerated the importance of their clamour, and failed to appreciate the very important fact

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that, when the boycott began, the greatest political party in India, namely, the Congress, was in its weakest position (a fact which will be explained at greater length later on); and that when it was almost on its last legs it found a plausible cry in this unseemly campaign against the Simon Commission.

It has, however, to be admitted that Lord Irwin honestly endeavoured to fight the campaign against the Simon Commission. He knew, perhaps more accurately than anyone else, that some of the Indian political leaders who were in the forefront of this campaign had personal motives for launching it. With great courage Lord Irwin, in the course of his address to the Indian Legislative Assembly, in the spring of 1928, demanded that Indian political leaders should revise their attitude of antipathy towards the Simon Commission and behave like *honest controversialists*. Moreover, as the head of the Indian Administration, he left no stone unturned to help the Simon Commission in conducting its enquiry. He set up the Indian Central Committee and the various provincial committees; he helped these committees by speeding up their work, and he assisted Sir John Simon and his colleagues while they were in India.

Then, however, his courage failed. Owing, possibly, to too close an association with Mr. V. J. Patel, who was then the President of the Indian Legislative Assembly, Lord Irwin seemed to feel that he had sinned against political India by concurring with the British Cabinet in the appointment of the Simon Commission. At that time—according to political gossip in India—Mr. Patel was daily instilling in Lord Irwin the belief that nationalist India, especially as represented by the Congress, was such a potent force that the British Government could never check, curb, nor crush it, and that safety for the British Government lay only in recognising this force and coming to terms with it. The manner and expression of such recognition, according to Mr. Patel and his political

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associates, were simple: the British Government would have to make a new declaration which would have the effect of scrapping the Simon Commission and the Report it might produce, and thereafter invite the active agitators in the boycott campaign against the Simon Commission to a Conference with the British Government, and what they all decided at such a Conference would have to be incorporated in a political charter for India. By such a simple process—so Mr. Patel and his political associates advised Lord Irwin—India would be saved to the British Empire. Otherwise India would wrest her independence and thereby bring ruin and disaster to Great Britain. When this political advice was tendered to Lord Irwin it seemed to affect his mind like a vicious poison and to cloud his political judgment. However that may be, he certainly took the fatal decision of following the lead which Mr. Patel had given him.

In the summer of 1929 Lord Irwin came over to London to discuss with His Majesty's Government, in particular with Mr. Wedgwood Benn, what was according to him the only solution that could save India to the British Empire. While these discussions between Lord Irwin and the British Cabinet were going on—so responsible report stated at the time—Mr. Patel continued to advise Lord Irwin on what was to be the policy of the British Government towards India. Thus inspired, the Doubting Thomases and political Hamlets of Whitehall at last arrived at a formula which, at a magic touch, was to avert political disaster and restore India to Great Britain. The irony and indeed the tragedy of the situation was that all the talk of Great Britain losing India was only a myth, and that the myth was mistaken for truth by Lord Irwin and the British statesmen then at the helm of government. Thus on the 23rd October, 1929, Lord Irwin, after his political sojourn of four months in England, returned to India and issued on behalf of His Majesty's Government a new declaration of policy with reference to India.

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This announcement in the "Gazette Extraordinary" ran thus :

"I have just returned from England where I have had the opportunity of prolonged consultation with His Majesty's Government. Before I left this country I said publicly that as the King-Emperor's representative in India I should hold myself bound to tell my fellow-countrymen, as faithfully as I might, of India's feelings, anxieties and aspirations. In my endeavours to discharge that undertaking I was assisted by finding, as I had expected, a generous and sincere desire, not only on the part of His Majesty's Government but on that of all persons and parties in Great Britain, to hear and to appreciate everything that it was my duty to represent.

These are critical days, when matters by which men are deeply touched are in issue and when, therefore, it is inevitable that political feeling should run high, and that misunderstandings, which would scarcely arise in conditions of political tranquillity, should obtain firm foothold in men's minds. I have, nevertheless, not faltered in my belief that behind all the disquieting tendencies of the time, there lay the great mass of Indian opinion, overflowing all divisions of race, religion, or political thought, fundamentally loyal to the King-Emperor, and, whether consciously or not, only wanting to understand and to be understood. On the other side I have never felt any doubt that opinion in Great Britain, puzzled as it might be by events in India, or only perhaps partially informed as to their true significance, was unshaken in its determination that Great Britain should redeem to the full the pledges she has given for India's future. On both countries the times have laid a heavy and in some ways a unique responsibility, for the influence on the world of a perfect understanding between Great Britain and India might surely be so great that no scales can give us the measure either of the prize of success, or the price of failure in our attempts to reach it.

In my discussions with the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State, it was inevitable that the principal topic should have been the course of events in India. It is not profitable on either side to discuss to what extent, or with

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what justification, the appointment of a Parliamentary Commission two years ago has affected the general trend of Indian thought and action. Practical men must take facts and situations as they are, and not as they would have them be.

Sir John Simon's Commission, assisted as it has been by the Indian Central Committee, is now at work on its Report, and until that Report is laid before Parliament it is impossible, and even if it were possible, it would in the view of His Majesty's Government clearly be improper, to forecast the nature of any constitutional changes that may subsequently be proposed. In this respect every British party is bound to preserve to itself complete freedom of action. But what must constantly engage our attention, and is a matter of deep concern to His Majesty's Government, is the discovery of means by which, when the Commission has reported, the broad question of British Indian constitutional advance may be approached in co-operation with all those who can speak authoritatively for opinion in British India. I would venture to recall some words which I used in addressing the Assembly eight months ago in a reference to the then existing political situation. 'On the one side' I said, 'it is as unprofitable to deny the right of Parliament to form its free and deliberate judgment on the problem as it would be shortsighted of Parliament to undertake the importance of trying to reach a solution which might carry the willing assent of political India.' We shall surely stray from the path, at the end of which lies achievement, if we let go either one or other of these two main guiding principles of political action.

But there has lately emerged, from a totally different angle, another set of considerations which is very relevant to what I have just stated on this matter to be the desire of His Majesty's Government.

The Chairman of the Commission has pointed out in correspondence with the Prime Minister, which, I understand, is being published in England, that as their investigation has proceeded, he and his colleagues have been greatly impressed, in considering the direction which the future constitutional development of India is likely to take, with the importance of bearing in mind the relations which may,

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at some future time, develop between British India and the Indian States. In his judgment it is essential that the methods, by which this future relationship between these two constituent parts of Greater India may be adjusted, should be fully examined. He has further expressed the opinion that if the Commission's Report and the proposals subsequently to be framed by the Government take this wider range, it would appear necessary for the Government to revise the scheme of procedure as at present proposed. He suggests that what might be required, after the Reports of the Statutory Commission and the Indian Central Committee have been made, considered and published, but before the stage is reached of the Joint Parliamentary Committee, would be the setting up of a Conference in which His Majesty's Government should meet representatives both of British India and of the States, for the purpose of seeking the greatest possible measure of agreement for the final proposals which it would later be the duty of His Majesty's Government to submit to Parliament. The procedure by Joint Parliamentary Committee conferring with delegations from the Indian Legislature and other bodies, which was previously contemplated, and is referred to in Sir John Simon's letter to myself of 6th February, 1928, would still be appropriate for the examination of the Bill when it is subsequently placed before Parliament, but would, in the opinion of the Commission, obviously have to be preceded by some such Conference as they have suggested.

With these views I understand that His Majesty's Government are in complete accord. For, while they will greatly desire, when the time comes, to be able to deal with the question of British Indian political development under conditions the most favourable to its successful treatment, they are, with the Commission, deeply sensible of the importance of bringing under comprehensive review the whole problem of the relations of British India and the Indian States. Indeed, an adjustment of these interests in their view is essential for the complete fulfilment of what they consider to be the underlying purpose of British policy, whatever may be the method for its furtherance which Parliament may decide to adopt.

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The goal of British policy was stated in the declaration of August, 1917, to be that of providing for the gradual development of self-governing institutions, with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible Government in India as an integral part of the British Empire. As I recently pointed out, my own Instrument of Instruction from the King-Emperor expressly states that it is His Majesty's will and pleasure that the plans laid by Parliament in 1919 should be the means by which British India may attain its due place among His Dominions. Ministers of the Crown, moreover, have more than once publicly declared that it is the desire of the British Government that India should, in the fulness of time, take her place in the Empire with equal partnership with the Dominions. But in view of the doubts which have been expressed both in Great Britain and India regarding the interpretation to be placed on the intentions of the British Government in enacting the Statute of 1919, I am authorised on behalf of His Majesty's Government to state clearly that in their judgment it is implicit in the declaration of 1917 that the natural issue of India's constitutional progress, as there contemplated, is the attainment of Dominion status.

In the full realisation of this policy, it is evidently important that the Indian States should be afforded an opportunity of finding their place, and even if we cannot at present exactly foresee on what lines this development may be shaped, it is from every point of view desirable that whatever can be done should be done to ensure that action taken now is not inconsistent with the attainment of the ultimate purpose which those, whether in British India or the States, who look forward to some unity of All-India, have in view.

His Majesty's Government consider that both these objects, namely, that of finding the best approach to the British Indian side of the problem, and secondly of ensuring that in this process the wider question of closer relations in the future between the two parts of Greater India is not overlooked, can best be achieved by the adoption of procedure such as the Commission has outlined. When, therefore, the Commission and the Indian Central Committee have submitted their Reports and these have been published, and when His Majesty's Government have been able, in con-

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sultation with the Government of India, to consider these matters in the light of all the material then available, they will propose to invite representatives of different parties and interests in British India and representatives of the Indian States to meet them, separately or together as circumstances may demand, for purpose of conference and discussion in regard both to the British-Indian and the All-Indian problems. It will be their earnest hope that by this means it may subsequently prove possible on these grave issues to submit proposals to Parliament which may command a wide measure of general assent.

It is not necessary for me to say how greatly I trust that the action of His Majesty's Government may evoke response from and enlist the concurrence of all sections of opinion in India, and I believe that all who wish India well, wherever and whoever they are, desire to break through the webs of mistrust that have lately clogged the relations between India and Great Britain. I am firmly assured that the course of action now proposed is at once the outcome of a real desire to bring to the body politic of India the touch that carries with it healing and health, and is the method by which we may best hope to handle these high matters in the way of constructive statesmanship."

When this declaration was made, Lord Irwin, his political advisers in India, and the British statesmen who had co-operated with him in issuing this declaration, were all completely sanguine that it would satisfy the Congress agitators and other Indian political leaders who had stumped the country against the Simon Commission, and would bring peace and contentment to India. And particularly Lord Irwin imagined at that time that he had solved the Indian political problem, and that before he completed his remaining term of Viceroyalty he would see India a loyal and contented member of the British Empire.

CHAPTER II

LORD IRWIN'S DECLARATION

ACCORDING to Lord Irwin and his supporters, the fundamental conception on which the scheme of the India Round Table Conference rests is that from now onwards Indians themselves should become the architects of India's political destiny. Any decision therefore that the British Parliament might have to make concerning the changes in India's political status and her constitution will have to be made in full consultation with Indian leaders and with their co-operation. In other words, the essence of the scheme of the Round Table Conference is that the Indian problem should be settled through consultation and negotiation with Indian political leaders. Settlement through negotiation is the bedrock of the India Round Table Conference.

If this definition is accepted as valid, it follows that the parties to the settlement should be free to negotiate. In this case there were three parties to effect the settlement: the British Delegates representing the British Parliament, the Indian Princes, and the Indian Delegates representing the various interests and points of view in British India. For the successful termination of the India Round Table Conference, therefore, a three-party agreement on every problem at the Conference was necessary. Indeed a three-party agreement was the foundation on which the scheme of the Round Table Conference had to rest. But those who knew the Indian temperament and the age-long disputes between Indian communities and sections, could easily predict that the Conference scheme

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would always lack that foundation. This belief was shared by the delegates from British India, where there were fundamental differences and acute conflicts between the Hindus, the Moslems, and other Minority Communities like the Sikhs, the Depressed Classes and the Anglo-Indians. Agreement between the representative leaders of these communities residing in British India was a necessary preliminary to the three-party agreement at the Round Table Conference. This fact was admitted by the delegates from British India ; and it was also admitted by the British Government. Thus everyone concerned in the Round Table Conference realised that an unreserved settlement between the Indian Delegates of the communal and minorities disputes was essential for the success of the Conference. If such a settlement was not achieved the British Government could not risk the transfer of authority to a set of people who, owing to their own internal disputes and feuds, could never beneficially utilise their newly-acquired rights.

The urgent necessity for an agreement between Indian leaders was recognised by Gandhi and every British Indian Delegate at the Conference ; and before the India Round Table Conference assembled for its first session in London in November, 1930, the representative spokesmen of the various communities in British India strenuously laboured to find a solution of the communal and minorities disputes. They made one supreme effort when during the Spring of 1930 the All-Parties Conference was held in Delhi. Although this All-Parties Conference was presided over by Sir A. P. Patro, who is enormously popular with every section and group throughout India, the Delegates failed to arrive at any settlement. Once again the All-Parties Conference was dissolved after registering the failure of the leaders of Indian communities to compose their internal differences and antagonisms.

Again during the first session of the India Round Table Conference—between November, 1930 and January, 1931

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—the British Indian Delegates attempted to settle between themselves, by mutual consent, the disputes of the Hindus, the Moslems, and other Indian minorities. Although the Indian Delegates were informally assisted by the British Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for India in the Socialist Cabinet, once again the Indian Delegates could not compose their differences and consent to a settlement. By that failure the Indian Delegates not only disgraced themselves, but grievously disappointed the Socialist Cabinet and Lord Irwin, who had laid great store by the Round Table Conference scheme. The novel method of solving the Indian problem by settlement through negotiation had failed.

But hope still lingered. On their return to India, between March and August of 1931, many other attempts were made by the British Indian delegates and other influential Indian leaders to secure a settlement of the communal and minorities disputes. Although these efforts also came to nothing, the Indian Delegates remained optimistic, and after assembling in London for the second session of the India Round Table Conference, which commenced on the 15th September of 1931, for over eight weeks they struggled earnestly to evolve a scheme of settlement between the Hindus, the Moslems, and other minority communities in India. But failure still dogged their footsteps, and the negotiations broke down. At the 10th meeting of the Minorities Committee (on 13th November, 1931), the Prime Minister used grave and significant language.

“As regards this Committee [he said], I am profoundly sorry that a complete agreement has not been reached, because I want to emphasise what I have said before—and I think everyone of you agrees with it—that at the foundation of any progress towards the setting up of an Indian constitution lies the problem of community representation, community rights, community protection and so on. How the Legislatures are to be constructed, how the constituencies are to be determined and allotted—I am sure none of you can conceive of a

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constitution being drafted and constructed without that foundation being laid in it.

The work of this Committee, therefore, was from the very beginning of supreme importance, and I am sorry that you have been unable to present to us an agreed plan."

The failure was officially announced by the Prime Minister at the plenary sitting of the second session of the India Round Table Conference, on the 1st December, 1931, in the following words :

"We must all, however, realise that there stands in the way of progress, whether for the Provinces or for the Centre, that formidable obstacle, the communal deadlock. I have never concealed from you my conviction that this is above all others a problem for you to settle by agreement among yourselves. The first of the privileges and the burdens of a self-governing people is to agree how the democratic principle of representation is to be applied—or, in other words, who are to be represented and how it is to be done. This Conference has twice essayed this task—twice, I regret to say, it has failed. I cannot believe that you will demand that we, his Majesty's Government, should accept these failures as final and conclusive.

But time presses. We shall soon find that our endeavours to proceed with our plans are held up (indeed, they have been held up already) if you cannot present us with a settlement acceptable to all parties as the foundations upon which to build. In that event his Majesty's Government would be compelled to apply a provisional scheme, for they are determined that even this disability shall not be permitted to be a bar to progress.

This would mean that his Majesty's Government would have to settle for you, not only your problems of representation, but also to decide as wisely and justly as possible what checks and balances the Constitution is to contain to protect Minorities from an unrestricted and tyrannical use of the democratic principle expressing itself solely through majority power. I desire to warn you that if the Government have to supply, even temporarily, this part of your Constitution which you

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are unable to supply for yourselves, and though it will be the Government's care to provide the most ample safeguards for Minorities so that none of them need feel that they have been neglected, it will not be a satisfactory way of dealing with this problem."

A dispassionate examination of the efforts made in London by the Indian delegates during September and December, 1931, to settle these disputes clearly shows that, more than any single person, Gandhi was responsible for the breakdown of the communal and minorities settlement. His whole attitude in this matter was one of recurring inconsistency. He changed his ground from day to day, and like a clever tactician explained away his own inconsistency in a series of interviews of a propagandist type, which flooded the Indian and the American press. In these interviews Gandhi sought to appear as the staunchest friend of the Moslems and other Indian minorities. Perhaps with the Indian crowd this camouflage succeeded, and it is the more essential, in fairness to all concerned, that the facts be stated.

During all his political career Gandhi has been the avowed leader of the Congress, and Congress, in spite of the adherence to its creed of some Moslems, is purely a Hindu party. Therefore it is that at every important turn in India during the past four years, Congress took decisions which were never supported by responsible Moslem leaders. Thus, even in 1928, when the Congress Party produced the Nehru Report, the propaganda that the Congress leaders conducted had only the effect of antagonising the Moslems. During the Calcutta Congress session, 1928, even a moderate Moslem leader like Mr. Jinnah was compelled to repudiate the Nehru Report, and repudiate it in terms that were a clear indictment of the Congress as a partisan Hindu organisation.

From December, 1928, onwards the real split between the Hindus and the Moslems commenced. Thus when

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throughout 1929 the Congress Party carried on its anti-British propaganda—it will be remembered that in December, 1929, during the Lahore sittings of the Congress the Independence Resolution was passed—it did not receive any support from the Moslems. Again, when Lord Irwin's earnest, and almost humiliating, appeal to the Congress leaders to respond to his offer of a Round Table Conference failed, and the Congress decided to boycott the Conference, it was significant that not one single responsible Moslem leader stood by the Congress decision of boycott and negation. In this connection it deserves to be remembered with gratitude that when Congress attempted to set India on fire through its campaign of civil disobedience in 1930, the Moslems solidly avoided that campaign of anarchy.

In spite of this divergence of interests between Hindu Congress and the Moslems, Gandhi, after concluding his pact with Lord Irwin in March of 1931, again attempted to rope the Moslems into the Congress camp and get them to commit themselves to a Joint Electorate, which, as every Moslem in India knows to-day, cannot contribute to the advance of the Moslem community. This attempt was conducted by Gandhi in the astute manner which betrays the tricky politician. He did not at any time openly show his hand and attempt in a frank and straightforward manner the conversion of the Moslems to the Congress point of view. He did it through friends like His Highness the Nawab of Bhopal and Dr. Ansari, who readily consented to act as Gandhi's political agents. These two agents of Gandhi between April and July of 1931 took on themselves the trouble of arranging various Moslem Conferences in Bhopal and Lucknow; and at these Conferences they attempted to make the Moslems commit themselves to the Congress scheme and objective. If they had succeeded Gandhi's object would have been easily won. But even when they failed the disgrace of the failure was not to fall on Gandhi's head. Such, indeed,

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was the astute game which Gandhi played for some time before he left India for London.

It is, therefore, not surprising that when Gandhi, during the commencement of the second session of the India Round Table Conference, attempted to secure the nomination of Dr. Ansari to the Conference, the Moslem Delegation with one voice protested against it. Gandhi, on his side, was prepared to wreck the success of the Conference for the sake of Dr. Ansari's nomination.

Regarding other Indian minorities also Gandhi has always had only one policy—that of compelling the Minorities to subordinate their own interests to those of the Congress. That is why towards the end of November, 1931, Gandhi totally repudiated the claims of the Depressed Classes for special representation and safeguards, and did not hesitate to exhibit his anger when the delegates of the Depressed Classes at the Conference succeeded in arriving at an understanding with the Moslem delegates. Now at least it is to be hoped that the Depressed Classes in India will come to realise the true value of Gandhi's solicitude for them.

It is time that the British public realised that at no time has Gandhi been any other than the partisan leader of a partisan political party in India, and that any claim on his part of national leadership is only a myth. Of course, this does not mean that Gandhi is not a potential political force in India. He is that because—let it be clearly remembered—he leads the Congress party, which is unscrupulous enough to aim at Repudiation and Independence through—let it be remembered again—anarchy and boycott.

CHAPTER III

THE OFFER OF THE ROUND TABLE

FROM the account rendered in the preceding pages it will be seen that owing to his close association with Indian nationalist leaders like Mr. V. J. Patel, Lord Irwin regarded the appointment of the Simon Commission, which was entirely a Parliamentary Commission appointed by Parliament and answerable to Parliament alone, as a fundamental mistake on the part of British statesmen responsible for the government of India. He also sincerely believed that the Simon Commission wounded the self-respect and pride of nationalist India; and with equal sincerity he came to the conclusion that the British Government had to set right the wrong done to India. According to Lord Irwin, the sooner this was done the better was it for the interests of Great Britain itself.

Therefore with his influence with the Socialist Government in London, he made a new offer of a Round Table Conference where all the Indian nationalist leaders who had been excluded from the Simon Commission could find a place of equality with British Statesmen, and could thus settle the political future of India by discussion and negotiation. Such an offer should have satisfied Indian nationalist leaders like Gandhi and the late Pandit Motilal Nehru. (How Gandhi and the late Pandit Motilal Nehru rejected Lord Irwin's offer of a Round Table Conference has already been explained in the preceding pages.) And, indeed, such an offer could not have been objectionable from any standpoint.

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But, unfortunately, in his intrepid anxiety to please and placate Indian nationalist leaders who had started a virulent political propaganda both against the Simon Commission and the Government of India, Lord Irwin stepped beyond the limits of political prudence and constitutional propriety. Thus, everyone knew, that by the actual words used in his declaration offering the Round Table Conference scheme, Lord Irwin attempted to bestow on Indians a constitutional right which, by no stretch of political imagination, could ever be claimed by them. He implied that it was not British Parliament alone which had the right of deciding India's political status; but that Indian leaders could claim to share the responsibility. He thus conferred on Indian nationalist leaders a status equal to that of the two Houses in Westminster.

But what Lord Irwin did was not only this: he short-circuited the Simon Commission itself. In his Declaration he actually stated: "But in view of the doubts which have been expressed both in Great Britain and India regarding the interpretation to be placed on the intentions of the British Government in enacting the Statute of 1919, I am authorised on behalf of His Majesty's Government to state clearly that, in their judgment, it is implicit in the Declaration of 1917 that the natural issue of India's constitutional progress, as there contemplated, is the attainment of Dominion Status.

These words meant that irrespective of what the Simon Commission, after its careful scrutiny and investigation of the conditions in India, might recommend to Parliament as the next possible step in India's political evolution, the British Government was pledged to confer on India Dominion Status. So at least the Indian press and Indian political leaders regarded Lord Irwin's Declaration.

Thus, Lord Irwin prejudged the findings of the Simon Commission, and committed the British Parliament to a new declaration of political policy even before the Commission which Parliament itself had appointed could

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produce its report. Perhaps those who defend Lord Irwin's Declaration would retort that even prior to this time the British Parliament had, through the declaration made by Montagu, committed itself to a policy only repeated in Lord Irwin's Declaration. But any such defence cannot disprove one fact, of supreme importance to remember, namely, that owing to the Declaration made by Lord Irwin the Indian political sections accepted as a settled fact that any recommendations the Simon Commission might make, had lost their validity. In this belief Indian political leaders frequently boasted that, as far as they were concerned, whatever report the Simon Commission might produce was of no more use than so much waste-paper. Such impertinent and arrogant references to a body, which was still labouring honestly and conscientiously on its task, produced immense prejudice in India against the Commission. When the Report was at last published, the Indian nationalist press and Indian political leaders treated it contemptuously, and some of them (like Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru) decried it with passion and fury. Owing to all these facts the Report of the Simon Commission, which still is the only exhaustive survey of the Indian problem, was robbed of all its importance in India, and did not even get the bare fair play which it deserved.

It was thus Lord Irwin and the Socialist Cabinet, more than anyone else, who were responsible for the repudiation of the Simon Report in India. And the repudiation itself engendered in India such a contempt for British authority as was never before exhibited in that country. British prestige thereby received an almost mortal wound.

CHAPTER IV

LORD IRWIN AND INDIAN NATIONALISM

IN the preceding chapter we have seen how Lord Irwin's Declaration resulted in lowering British prestige in India; and now it will be explained how Lord Irwin's policy, as embodied in his Declaration, contributed to give Indian nationalism the platform from which it could assail British interests in a country which owes her present prosperity very largely to the British administration. It will be recalled that almost from the commencement of his Viceregal career, Lord Irwin introduced an innovation in his dealings with Indian nationalist leaders. He placed them on a footing of equality, and treated them with extreme courtesy and consideration. In doing this he even admitted encroachments which were not helpful in maintaining the traditional prestige of his high office.

But the real harm to British prestige resulted not so much from Lord Irwin's personal behaviour towards Indian nationalist leaders as by his attitude towards the Indian National Congress. Lord Irwin committed the mistake of regarding the Indian National Congress in the same way as His Majesty's Government in Great Britain would regard His Majesty's Opposition. He might have personally appreciated the moral strength of Gandhi's personality, but that was no reason why he should have bestowed on Gandhi (at that time the leader of a Congress which had avowed the intention of destroying India's connection with Great Britain, and of heaping on Great Britain every possible ruin), a status which one plenipotentiary bestows on another. Such an attitude

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of deference on the part of Lord Irwin towards Gandhi set a premium in India on all Congress agitators who came to regard themselves as superior to every British official or Indian administrator serving the Government in India.

From another point of view the attitude adopted by Lord Irwin towards Gandhi and the Indian National Congress had deplorable consequences. Lord Irwin, no doubt, honestly believed that any Viceroy who desired to be true to his own duty and the Instrument of Instructions which he receives from His Majesty the King-Emperor has the obligation also of helping India to become a self-governing nation. In other words, one of the important duties of any Viceroy is to encourage Indian nationalism, foster it, and give it that nurture that is necessary to its greater growth. So far from ignoring Indian nationalism, he acknowledged and encouraged it. Not only so; he regarded the Congress Party as alone representing the spirit of Indian nationalism. In this view Lord Irwin lost sight of the correct political perspective. From 1927 onwards the Congress Party had ceased to represent or embody all that is best in Indian nationalism; it had no place for illustrious Indians like the Poet Rabindranath Tagore who, more than anyone else, embodies and exemplifies Indian nationalism in its beautiful faith of Indo-British unity. From then onwards the Congress was only the political party of the Hindu intelligentsia. This fact, this sectional aspect of the Congress Party, was proved beyond doubt when it produced the Nehru Report in the autumn of 1928. That Report was the political charter for the Hindu intelligentsia. So at that time the Moslems of India regarded it; the Moslems in Calcutta in December of 1928 categorically asserted that the Nehru Report was inimical to the interests of Moslems and other Indian Minorities, and that in producing it the Congress Party had once again betrayed itself as the mouthpiece merely of the Hindu intelligentsia. Thus from the autumn of

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1928 onwards, by slow degrees, the Congress entrenched itself as a narrow, sectional organisation, and ceased to be representative of India's varied interests. Yet still Lord Irwin regarded the Congress as a party representing Indian nationalism, and as one that was able to make, at any time, a unified appeal in India.

CHAPTER V

THE SUPER VICEROY

SUCH an attitude on the part of Lord Irwin, as the head of the Indian Government, towards the Congress was fraught with immense danger. Although in 1928 the Congress had lost the support of the Moslems and thereby had weakened its own position, in the December session of 1928 it passed a resolution threatening that if the British Government did not confer Dominion Status by the 31st of December, 1930, it would commit itself to the attainment of Independence for India and severance from the British Empire. This resolution was really tantamount to high treason and, according to the penal laws of the country, the members of the Congress Party were all liable to long terms of imprisonment. Moreover, during this session the Congress challenged British authority in India. In these circumstances a Viceroy might have felt compelled to take against the Congress immediate action under the laws of the country; but instead of striking a blow at the Congress Party early in 1929 (when, owing to the hostility of the Moslems, it was in a weak position), Lord Irwin and his supine Executive Council took no notice of its act of treason and, on the other hand, allowed it the fullest latitude and freedom to carry on propaganda for Independence. Thus, owing to an incorrect view of the Congress by Lord Irwin, and owing to the weak-kneed, stupid, and blundering incompetence of his Executive Council, Gandhi and other Congress leaders throughout 1930 were permitted to preach sedition and hatred against the British. Gandhi and his colleagues did not fail to

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use such a God-sent opportunity. They launched throughout India the Congress propaganda for Independence.

This uninterrupted propaganda engendered in India a new and serious situation. The young men of the Punjab, the Frontier, the United Provinces, and Bengal—in fact, throughout Northern India—came to be fascinated by the alluring idea of Indian Independence, and some of them, in a fit of emotional impetuosity, pledged themselves to be martyrs of the cause. Consequently, by the end of 1930, the ranks of the Congress Party were greatly swelled by Indian youth with anarchist tendencies.

Even when the Lahore session of the Congress had ended in January, 1930, after passing the Independence Resolution, and even after Gandhi had forwarded to Lord Irwin, as the Viceroy of India, his ultimatum of a campaign of civil disobedience, Lord Irwin still desired the co-operation of Gandhi and his Congress colleagues, because these were, in his judgment, the spokesmen of Indian nationalism which had to be acknowledged and placated at any cost. When Gandhi started the Congress campaign of civil disobedience, from April, 1930, onwards, the Government of India attempted only in a half-hearted manner to fight that campaign and assert British authority in India. Congress leaders, who disobeyed the ordinances passed by the Government of India and the other penal laws of the country, were sentenced to such terms of imprisonment as made legal trial a mockery and a farce. If any firm action was taken by the Government, it was always preceded by some kind of apology totally uncalled for in the circumstances. The behaviour of the Government of India and of some of the provincial governments was one of abject surrender.

After Gandhi and other Congress leaders had been incarcerated, and the civil disobedience campaign was still being carried on by other Congress agitators, Lord Irwin and the Socialist Cabinet, through such intermediaries as Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Mr. Jayakar, and His Highness

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the Nawab of Bhopal, once again endeavoured to secure the participation of Gandhi and other Congress leaders at the India Round Table Conference which was to assemble in London on the 10th November, 1930; but Gandhi, the late Pandit Motilal Nehru, and his son, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, who were then in prison, firmly declined to co-operate with the Government or participate in the Round Table Conference.

When, thus, finally it was known that Gandhi and his Congress colleagues would not participate, the Socialist Government and Lord Irwin at last mustered their courage and announced the personnel of the India Round Table Conference. An unwieldy number of Indian delegates, who were supposed to represent India's varied interests, were nominated to the Conference; and it looked as though these men had been gathered from the highways and hedges of India and Burma for a novel kind of political exhibition in London.

Thus the first session of the India Round Table Conference was inaugurated in the first week of November, 1930, and it continued its deliberations until the 19th of January, 1931, when the Prime Minister, on behalf of the British Government, made another declaration of policy and adjourned the Conference till the autumn of 1931.

On the return of the Indian delegates to India in the early part of February of 1931, Lord Irwin once again attempted to secure the co-operation of Gandhi and the Congress Party at least for the second session of the India Round Table Conference, which was expected to meet in London in the autumn of 1931. With this object Lord Irwin moved swiftly and acted firmly. Gandhi and other influential Congress leaders who were still in prison were released, and again through the efforts of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Mr. Jayakar, and His Highness the Nawab of Bhopal, a meeting between Lord Irwin and Gandhi was arranged.

In the latter half of February of 1931 Gandhi went

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to Delhi and brought with him all his influential colleagues who were described by the Indian nationalist press as the members of the Congress Cabinet. Flattery ran further, and the house in which Gandhi and his colleagues lived was depicted by the American journalists then present in Delhi as the National Secretariat, over which flew, in derision and mockery of the Union Jack, the Congress flag of Independence. Thus Gandhi was now made secure as the leader of a political party working for India's Independence and severance from the British Empire.

These events endowed Gandhi with a prestige which no other unofficial Indian leader has ever before enjoyed in India. Thousands of Indians regarded it as an honour to meet and talk to him, and even some of the Indian officials working in the Government of India felt compelled to go to Gandhi's residence and pay their respects to him—as the saying goes in India. And several thousand of ignorant Indians, mostly peasants and workmen, actually believed that Gandhi had conquered the British Government and had come to Delhi to settle the terms of peace with a vanquished opponent. In those days, with Lord Irwin talking to Gandhi for hours and hours, noon, evening, and up to midnight, it looked as though the Viceroy himself had installed Gandhi as the super-Viceroy of India.

After many 'heart-to-heart' talks, Lord Irwin and Gandhi negotiated the terms of settlement between the Government of India and the Congress. These terms of settlement were incorporated in an official document which came to be designated as 'the Irwin-Gandhi pact'.

The publication of this pact struck a fatal blow at British prestige in India; but even this one could have borne if there had been any compensating advantage. The gains however for Lord Irwin and his Government, which had allowed its own prestige to be shattered, were unsubstantial. After the Irwin-Gandhi pact had been signed Gandhi proceeded to Karachi, where the Congress was holding its session for 1931. The Karachi session,

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the guiding spirit of which was Gandhi, did not pass any unqualified resolution to participate in the second session of the India Round Table Conference; on the contrary, it repeated the Independence Resolution passed in the previous session of the Congress in Lahore. Gandhi and the Congress were thus still unrepentant. They stuck to their guns and went on with the bombardment more fiercely than before. Thus Lord Irwin had not the satisfaction of knowing definitely before he left India whether, for all the sacrifices he had made, he would have his reward, namely, the co-operation of Gandhi, whom he had himself installed as the super-Viceroy of India, and his Congress, at the second session of the India Round Table Conference. Even for a few weeks after Lord Willingdon had assumed the Viceroyalty of India, Gandhi still continued to play the rôle of usurper; but after heaping many humiliations on the executive authorities in Bombay and other parts of India, he at last decided to sail for London and participate in the second session of the Round Table Conference.

The question now arises whether Lord Irwin and the Socialist Cabinet were justified in securing the co-operation of Gandhi and his colleagues at the India Round Table Conference at such a sacrifice of dignity and prestige. If Gandhi's participation at the Round Table Conference on behalf of the Congress had ensured a permanent solution of the Indian problem, and also had ensured the creation of a contented, loyal and friendly India, the labours and travail of Lord Irwin would have been justified. But from the commencement it was obvious why Gandhi consented to proceed to London and participate in the Round Table Conference.

Gandhi knew—although the Government of India was blind to the fact—that by February, 1931 the resources of the Congress Party for continuing the civil disobedience campaign started by him in April, 1930 were completely depleted, and that the campaign could not possibly have been continued. In fact, before Gandhi left Allahabad

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for Delhi in the middle of February of 1931 to meet Lord Irwin, one of Gandhi's principal lieutenants in Bengal definitely told him that the Congress Party in Bengal had become so exhausted that it could not continue its campaign beyond April, 1931. Therefore Gandhi realised that prudence was the better part of valour, and decided to call off his campaign. But this he did in an artful manner, and made India believe that only as a mark of favour he had consented to enter into a pact with Lord Irwin and had agreed to a truce. If, however, Lord Irwin's Government had not started negotiations with Gandhi at that time—February to March, 1931—by the following April or May the Congress campaign of civil disobedience, lacking sustenance and support, would itself have collapsed.

Apart from this fact Gandhi had another reason for consenting to make it up with Lord Irwin, and thereby ensure for himself the much-needed opportunity for calling off the civil disobedience campaign started by him. He had realised that, in contrast to the decade before, when he had started his first campaign of civil disobedience against the British Government in India, he had alienated the Moslems. Not only had he alienated the Moslems, but there had come to be engendered an utter hostility on the part of the Moslems towards Gandhi and the Congress. The lack of co-operation with Moslems, and their bitterness towards him and the Congress, were regarded by Gandhi as his greatest handicap in challenging the authority of the British Government. He wanted some respite in order to regain the confidence of the Moslems and thereafter his hold over them. That is why, after concluding his pact with Lord Irwin, Gandhi, through two of his political friends, Dr. Ansari and His Highness the Nawab of Bhopal, between April and August of 1931, endeavoured to regain the co-operation of Moslem leaders. (This will be explained more fully in the following chapter.)

For these tactical reasons Gandhi agreed to call off his campaign, sign the pact with Lord Irwin, and consent

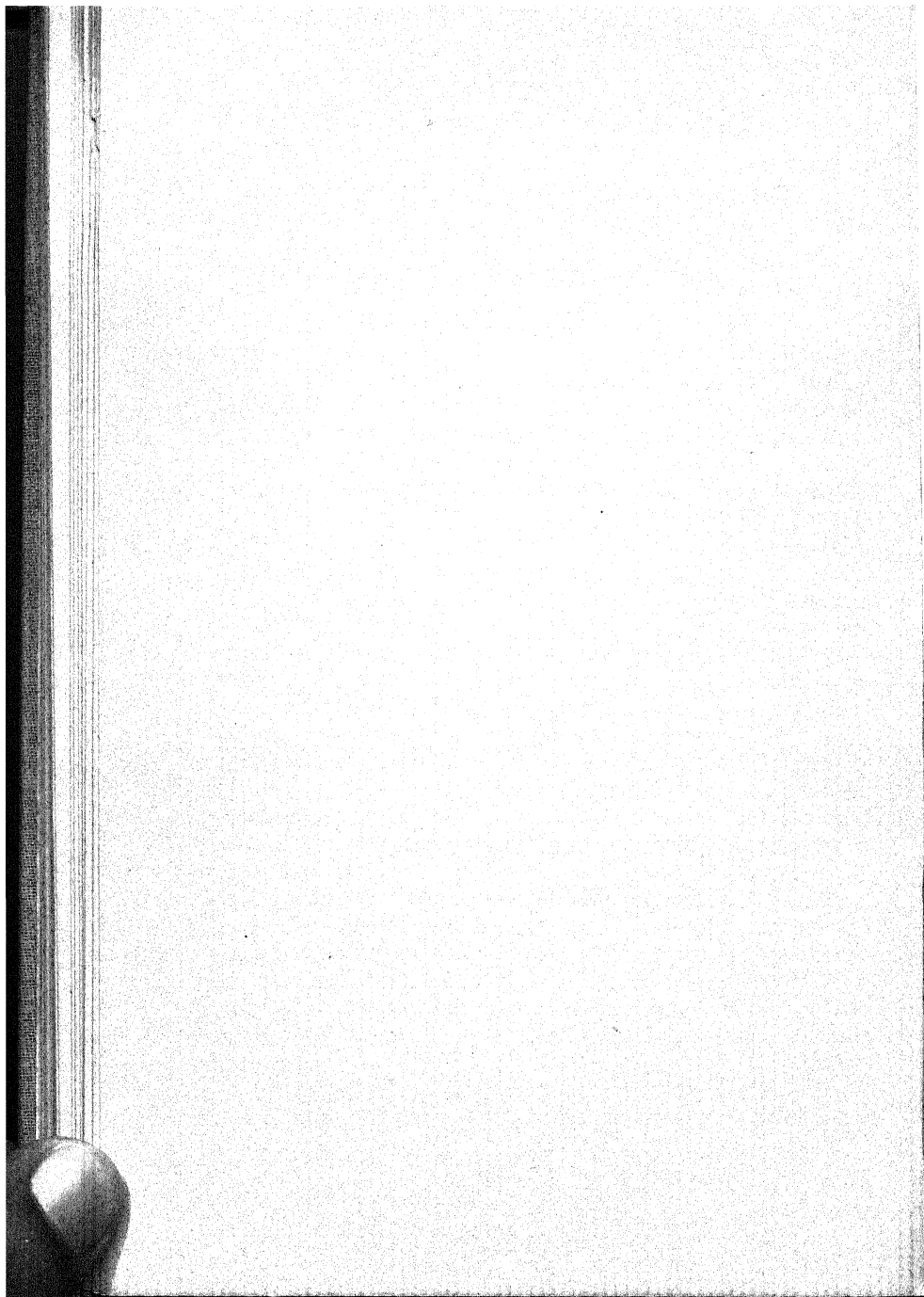
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to participate in the second session of the India Round Table Conference. Thus the co-operation Gandhi extended to Lord Irwin and to the Government of India was not absolutely genuine or without sinister significance. Even his presence in London during the second session of the Round Table Conference was utilised for furthering his own political propaganda. When he was still serving on the Conference, in London, Gandhi continued to issue to the American and Indian press long statements embodying his own obiter dicta, and his threats to the British Government. In fact his presence in London afforded Gandhi a new political platform for preaching the anti-British propaganda of the Congress.

Thus it becomes clear that those who had expected a solution of Indian discontent as by magic through the participation at the Round Table Conference of Gandhi and his Congress associates were terribly miscalculating the situation.

The facts here narrated form the background against which the two sessions of the Round Table Conference came to be held in London ; and in the following chapters it will be shown how the Indian Round Table Conference, which was brought into existence at the sacrifice of British prestige in India, failed to achieve what was expected of it.

SECTION TWO



CHAPTER I

SETTLEMENT THROUGH NEGOTIATION

WHEN Lord Irwin's Declaration, made on behalf of His Majesty's Government, was published in the "Gazette Extraordinary", Lord Irwin was greeted with a chorus of praise in the Indian Nationalist press, which significantly attached importance to the fact that Lord Irwin had categorically admitted: "I am authorised on behalf of His Majesty's Government to state clearly that, in their judgment, it is implicit in the Declaration of 1917 that the natural issue of India's constitutional progress, as they had contemplated, is the attainment of dominion status." Such a response in the Indian Nationalist press was gratifying indeed to Lord Irwin and those who had worked with him in behalf of that Declaration. In the first week of November of 1929 two important meetings of Indian political leaders were held, first in Bombay and then in Delhi; and at the Bombay meeting the Indian political leaders issued a manifesto warmly welcoming the announcement. At the Delhi meeting, however, unexpected trouble began to brew, and some of the left-wing members urged at that meeting that Lord Irwin's offer outlined in his Declaration should be rejected or accepted only after certain modifications. But once again, owing to the propagandist efforts of Mr. V. J. Patel, the clamour of the Congress left-wing was silenced, and a resolution unanimously approving Lord Irwin's Declaration was passed.

After the Delhi meeting had concluded its deliberations, Lord Irwin left Delhi on his winter tour in Southern India,

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but before he went, such Indian political leaders as Mr. Patel and Mr. Jinnah gave him an undertaking that they would use their influence with Gandhi and Pandit Motilal Nehru, and through them would ensure Congress co-operation in the Round Table Conference scheme outlined in Lord Irwin's Declaration. With such assurances the political horizon looked promising to Lord Irwin, and he left Delhi on his tour a happy man.

During his tour it was made clear to the Viceroy that both Gandhi and the late Pandit Motilal Nehru desired another final talk with him in order to clear minor misgivings and doubts. Accordingly on his return to Delhi on the 23rd December of 1929, His Excellency arranged to receive in private conference Gandhi, the late Pandit Motilal Nehru, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Mr. V. J. Patel, and Mr. Jinnah. The meeting was fixed for 5 p.m. on the afternoon of the 23rd December of 1929. Before the meeting had commenced Lord Irwin was confidentially assured by Mr. Patel, who was still acting as his political agent, that if the Government could grant amnesty and release political prisoners, Gandhi and Motilal Nehru, on behalf of the Congress, would be absolutely satisfied with the bona fides of the Government, and that they, again on behalf of the Congress, would promise their co-operation to Lord Irwin and would consent to participate in the Round Table Conference. Judge then of Lord Irwin's surprise when he discovered that Gandhi and Pandit Motilal Nehru had suddenly determined to take their stand upon a re-interpretation of a clause in the Delhi manifesto relating to the grant of Dominion Status, and to insist that if the participation of the Congress Party in the proposed Conference in London was to be secured, its functions were to be specifically restricted to the working out of a form of government for India equivalent to the full and immediate Dominion Status. How Lord Irwin, Mr. Jinnah, Mr. Patel and Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru on one side, and Gandhi and Pandit Motilal Nehru on the

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other, argued the issues and attempted to reach an amicable settlement cannot be told vividly because that meeting was confidential, and all those participating in it were pledged to secrecy. The official communique issued late that night announced that, after all, at the end of two and a half hours of discussion, the various matters arising out of the Delhi manifesto, such as the possibility of amnesty for political prisoners, had not been touched upon. The meeting terminated inconclusively, and Gandhi and Pandit Motilal Nehru left the Viceregal Lodge in a huff, vowing war against the Government of India. Gandhi, accompanied by Pandit Motilal Nehru, drove straight from the Viceregal Lodge to the Delhi Railway Station, and from there entrained for Lahore, where that year's session of the Indian National Congress was being held.

This session of the Congress in Lahore was presided over by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, who was the close and special associate of Gandhi, who was always prepared to do anything to please or help his younger and more violent colleague. At this time Jawaharlal Nehru, in order to retain his leadership among the younger sections in the Congress, was again outbidding every other Congress leader by making the most extreme demands from the Congress platform. Therefore it was to the interest of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru that the Congress should pass a resolution asserting that the goal of the Indian National Congress was not Dominion Status for India but complete Independence. To help Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru retain his leadership in the Congress camp, Gandhi connived with extreme sections in the Congress for the passage of the Independence Resolution. Gandhi, in doing this, gave the lie to his own alleged political convictions and his own pledges to Lord Irwin and Mr. Patel; he flouted Lord Irwin's offer of the Round Table Conference, and took on himself the responsibility of passing a resolution which at once put the Congress beyond the pale of law and

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made it an unlawful assembly. Gandhi in fact cast the
die and declared war against the Government at the moment
when Lord Irwin was hoping against hope that, through
his Declaration, India's political aspirations could be
satisfied.

CHAPTER II

THE REVOLT OF THE INDIAN PRINCES UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF HIS HIGHNESS THE MAHARAJA OF PATIALA

THE utter inability of the British Indian Delegates to compose their Hindu-Moslem and other minorities disputes, and to arrive at a harmonious and peaceful understanding among themselves, proved that the Round Table Conference was incapable of ensuring the three-party agreement which was essential to the success of the Conference scheme. Even if the Conference scheme had reached a two-party agreement—an agreement between the representatives of British India and of the British Government on the one hand, and the Indian Princes on the other—there would have been some consolation. But even a two-party agreement was rendered impossible by the events that happened in India from March, 1931, onwards.

On his return to India in March of 1931, His Highness the Maharaja of Patiala decided to reject the Sankey scheme of federation between the Indian Princes and British Indian Provinces drawn up during the first session of the Indian Round Table Conference. When His Highness the Maharaja of Patiala turned against the Sankey scheme of federation other influential Indian Princes, one by one, accepted his lead. And by the time the second session of the India Round Table Conference commenced its sittings in London in September, 1931, the opposition of the Indian Princes to that scheme of Federation was complete, influential and impregnable. Owing to this revolt the two-party agreement necessary to secure at

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least the partial success of the Round Table Conference was also frustrated.

Since the opposition of the Indian Princes to what has been regarded as the cardinal achievement of the first session of the India Round Table Conference, namely, a scheme of Federation between British Indian Provinces and the Indian Princes, has altered the basic outlook of the Round Table Conference, it will be necessary to recount in great detail all the events connected with this episode. At the outset it has to be remembered that before the first session of the India Round Table Conference met in London, neither the Government of India, nor the Simon Commission, nor any student of Indian politics, ever visualised, as an immediate practicable scheme, a federal constitution for all-India between the British Indian Provinces and the Indian States. Competent observers of the Indian problem were therefore surprised to hear that the Indian Princes, the British Indian Delegates, and the British Delegates at the Round Table Conference, had decided upon working out the details of a federal constitution embracing both the Indian States and British Indian Provinces. Everyone at that time admitted, however, that such a scheme was undoubtedly very ingenious, although to shrewd observers it was easily apparent that it had somewhere a catch in it. The catch was simply this: political leaders in British India were determined to demand that the British Government should immediately confer complete responsibility at the Central Government in British India, but they anticipated that unless the British Government were assured that it would be possible to incorporate the necessary safeguards, the Government would never accede to the granting of responsibility at the Centre. They also expected that the presence of the Indian Princes in the Constitution would be viewed by the British Government as constituting the most essential 'safeguard'. On the other hand, some of the Indian Princes, particularly His Highness the Nawab of Bhopal,

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His Highness the Maharaja of Bikaner, and Sir Akbar Hydari, who represented His Exalted Highness the Nizam of Hyderabad at the Conference, desired that at the earliest date the Indian Princes should get rid of the supervision now exercised by the Political Department of the Government of India, which, for their own personal motives, they had come intensely to dislike. They believed they could defeat the Political Department and set at nought its importance and influence by consenting to accept a scheme of Federation between British Indian Provinces and the Indian States. Moreover, His Highness the Nawab of Bhopal, His Highness the Maharaja of Bikaner, and Sir Akbar Hydari for some time had been consorting with the politicians in British India and encouraging their extremist professions. And thus it was that these too came to play with the idea of an all-India Federation.

When, during the first session of the India Round Table Conference, the scheme of an All-India Federation between the Indian States and British Indian Provinces was mentioned, all the Delegates of the Conference were swept off their feet by the novelty of the scheme, and in the first flush of enthusiasm the Delegates did not pause to examine all its implications. On the contrary, most of them, like a pack of political jackals, shouted the praises of what seemed to be a victorious idea. But in an important parenthesis it deserves to be stated that really patriotic and prudent delegates from British India at the Conference, like Mr. M. A. Jinnah and Sir A. P. Patro, who honestly desired the advance of India, and not merely the clap-trap of constitutional philandering, from the outset protested against the Sankey scheme and demanded its rejection and repudiation. But Mr. Jinnah and Sir A. P. Patro were then in a minority, and the other delegates cried them down and looked upon them as reprehensible pessimists. Thus, at that time, the Sankey scheme of Federation held the field and was immensely popular. Those who were responsible for the scheme were in proportionate jubilation ;

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yet the jubilation itself was destined to be short-lived. When, on his return to India, His Highness the Maharaja of Patiala led his revolt against the Sankey scheme, the opposition gained such strength that the rejection of the scheme by the Indian Princes became inevitable.

Now it is necessary to remember that His Highness the Maharaja of Patiala, as the ruler of the most important Sikh State in India, and as the Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes continuously for the past five years, has occupied a pre-eminent position in the public life of India. He has an influential following among the Indian Princes, and he also enjoys the confidence and friendship of many leaders of Indian opinion in British India. Although during the first session of the India Round Table Conference it was largely due to his initiative that the idea of a federal government in India, comprising Indian States and British India, came to be considered seriously, His Highness the Maharaja of Patiala was cautious enough not to commit himself at any time to any hasty decision. Even during the first session of the India Round Table Conference, it will be recalled that His Highness had blessed the idea of federation only as an ultimate possibility. But on his return to India in March of 1931 he was compelled, by the events that were then happening in India, to reconsider his previous views. The more he thought of this question, the more was he convinced that the scheme could not be in the interests of the Indian Princes, because, above everything else, the Indian States would thereby be denuded of their sovereign power and authority. To this extent, therefore, the prestige and prerogatives of the Indian Princes would have had to be surrendered, and in return for this headlong surrender the Indian Princes would have gained little advantage. For this reason His Highness realised that the Sankey scheme of Federation should be materially and substantially altered and supplemented in order to preserve and maintain the present position of the Indian States.

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With the courage of his convictions, in the first week of June of 1931, the Maharaja of Patiala issued an important statement condemning the Sankey scheme of Federation. The Sankey scheme of Federation would, he asserted, on careful analysis be found prejudicial to the best interests both of British India and the Indian States. In support of this contention His Highness quoted leading constitutional authorities and maintained that there had never been either federal tradition in India or cultural and political unity. He further pointed out that the Sankey scheme was vague and indefinite, and did not mark any improvement in the legal and political position of the states. On the other hand, he discerned in the Sankey scheme the continuance of the present arbitrary powers of paramountcy, as well as the certainty of the disappearance of the smaller states. Further, it was clear beyond all dispute that the Sankey scheme contained no Safeguards against encroachment by the Federal Executive as far as the Indian States were concerned.

"Indeed, from whatever aspect the problem be examined," said His Highness, "it is evident that we arrive at the same conclusion, Federation is a radical innovation ; it subverts the very basis of the well-tried and time-honoured political institutions of the states ; it attempts to destroy their individuality and political culture. It is a revolution as far-reaching as the absorption of the states in British India. I, therefore, feel, and feel strongly, that it is the duty of every well-wisher of the states to scrutinise this new polity with greatest care. It is his duty to consider what will be its precise effect according to the well-known laws of human nature, the lessons of history, and the actual circumstances of the time. It is futile to contend that the sovereignty and treaty rights of the states would remain unchanged, for the introduction of innovations in the time-honoured system is bound to revolutionise the whole. As a result of very careful and considered examination of the whole scheme I have come to entertain the firm con-

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viction that this new-found belief in a new-fangled federalism is at best an empty dream and a delusion pregnant with the greatest dangers to the very existence of the states."

Having condemned the Sankey scheme, the Maharaja of Patiala concentrated on what should be done when that scheme was rejected by the Indian Princes. He stated that it was still possible to construct a scheme which the Indian Princes could adopt to the advantage of themselves, British India, and the British Government. Thus, in his opinion the really honest scheme, which would conserve the privileges and rights of Indian Princes, which would secure the interests of Great Britain in India, and which would also further the progress of responsible government in British India, was by making the Indian Princes come together into a compact, strong, and well-organised assembly which would negotiate, discuss, and work in co-operation with the coming democratic forms of Government in British India. In sum, His Highness the Maharaja of Patiala desired not a federation between British Indian Provinces and individual Indian Princes, but a confederation of all the Indian States as the first necessary preliminary step towards the achievement of a federation between Indian States and British Indian Provinces.

Now it will have to be recalled that when in June, 1931, the Maharaja of Patiala issued his statement condemning the Sankey scheme and suggesting an alternative to it, an acute controversy was raised in India. From that moment it was clear to all impartial observers that His Highness the Maharaja of Patiala would have more support in this controversy than his political adversaries, His Highness the Maharaja of Bikaner and His Highness the Nawab of Bhopal, who, owing to a sinister combination between themselves and politicians in British India, had decided to sponsor the Sankey scheme of federation. Thus, it was apparent to all shrewd observers that His Highness the Maharaja of Patiala, with his undoubted

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popularity with his brother Princes, his gift for friendship, his charm, and his stupendous services in the cause of the Indian Princes, was a host by himself, and as such would certainly win the day in the battle he was waging, in spite of the fact that some of his adversaries had requisitioned the help of a section of the Indian press which has never had any compunction or scruples to conduct a campaign of personal vilification against conservative Indian Princes (like the Maharaja of Patiala) who have stood by the British Government in every hour of its need.

Within a fortnight almost after the Maharaja of Patiala had issued his statement condemning the Sankey scheme His Highness secured several converts among the Indian Princes. In the middle of June of 1931, His Highness the Nawab of Rampur, who easily occupies the front rank among the younger generation of the Indian Princes, stated (in the course of an interview His Highness gave to the Indian press from Simla) that in his opinion federalism between the Indian States and British Indian Provinces would certainly be commendable only in the fullness of time when the existing inevitable differences, due of course to historical reasons, between the two co-ordinating units could be effaced and make room for something really solid. Only after this has been achieved would it be fruitful to work out a federal constitution. Such a consummation, in His Highness's opinion, was possible if all the Indian Princes really set themselves first to the task of educating and training their subjects in the art of responsible government.

Naturally, therefore, the Nawab of Rampur believed that in the State the reign of law ought to be fundamental ; but realised that any such achievement could not be the work of a single day or a single hour. It had to broaden from precedent to precedent. Federation, while laudable as an ultimate result, was not practical politics for the present. Therefore, His Highness strongly felt that instead of wasting one's efforts in behalf of what was impractical,

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all the Indian Princes should steadfastly strive for closer union, co-operation, and understanding among themselves.

On another point the Nawab of Rampur desired to express himself strongly and without any reservation. His Highness could not approve of the propaganda that was being carried on by certain Princes for the elimination and negation of the political Department of the Government of India. He considered such a move to be thoroughly illogical and incongruous. Because treaty rights with the Crown were sacred and had to be treated as a reserved subject, the Viceroy, as the representative of the Crown, must have a special Department in charge of trained and experienced officers on the spot, and guided and controlled by central authority. Such is the *raison d'être* of the existence and composition of the Political Department.

Again in July of 1931 the Nawab of Rampur reiterated his adhesion to the point of view of the Maharaja of Patiala. "My views," stated the Nawab of Rampur, "that the principle of federation is not without grave elements of anxiety to Indian States, have been justified by the conflict of opinion between leading Princes in Bombay and Simla.

"The representatives of the Indian States chosen to attend the India Round Table Conference stand for certain set views, but they may have to cover activities beyond the scope of their obligations. In that case their commitments in London will have to be thoroughly sifted before they are accepted by the various states concerned.

"Transfer of responsibility for Defence and Fiscal affairs, surrender of a portion of their sovereignty and their vested interests, acquiescence to a uniform and identical system of law and justice, are some of the prominent factors which call for caution and prudence before a final decision is arrived at. No scheme of constitutional progress can enlist the sympathy and support of the Ruling Princes unless it possesses a blend of powerful idealism and practical sense."

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"I still adhere to my original plea that the federal scheme in its present form—namely the Sankey scheme—without the necessary stabilising and accommodating influences to protect our interests, is fraught with danger."

Apart from the Nawab of Rampur, many other prominent Indian Princes like their Highnesses the Nawab of Bahawalpur, the Maharana of Dholpur, the Nawab of Sachin, the Maharaja of Cutch, the Maharaja of Rewa, the Yuvraj of Limbdi, the Maharaja of Alwar, and the Prime Ministers of Indore and Bhavanagar, readily supported the Maharaja of Patiala in his opposition to the Sankey scheme. Almost within three weeks after the Maharaja of Patiala had issued his statement he secured the support of nearly thirty ruling Princes and Prime Ministers of States. Such a response, in spite of a fierce personal propaganda that was being carried on at that time by a certain Indian Prince against the Maharaja of Patiala, only pointed out the fact that, apart from any question of personal equation, a large section of Indian Princes had come to the conclusion that everything was not well with the scheme of federation outlined by Lord Sankey during the first session of the India Round Table Conference.

The Maharaja of Patiala and his supporters decided that it would be best for them to meet at a private conference and carefully review the entire question. Thus, in order fully to debate the whole question and appreciate every other point of view, the Maharaja of Patiala invited the Leading Indian Princes and their Prime Ministers to a conference in Bombay. The conference assembled in Bombay in the first week of August of 1931 and patiently worked, day after day, for well over a fortnight.

In order to enable those present at the Conference to appreciate fully all the legal and constitutional implications of the Sankey scheme, the Maharaja of Patiala placed before them the expert opinion he had obtained regarding the implications of the Sankey scheme from a constitutional

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lawyer of great eminence in India. His interpretation of the Sankey scheme was this :

The basic idea of the scheme of Federation is that it will result in the creation of a new State. The new federated India as a new State would be an entity entirely different from its component parts whether the component elements be British Indian Provinces or the British Indian Central Government on the one hand and the individual Indian States or a confederation of such States. The new Federal Legislature and the new Federal Executive will also be subordinate to the British Parliament and all component parts of such a federation must be subject to any express reservation which may be made to the power and authority of the British or British Indian Government, is that of an independent sovereign in the eye of International Law and unless the Sankey Scheme is radically modified this element of sovereignty would necessarily disappear. The sacrifice involved in assenting to such a result is such that the Indian States would hesitate before agreeing to join such a scheme.

Under the scheme as outlined, the Indian States or groups of States would appear to be separate units independent of each other in joining the Federation. It is further suggested that the Scheme of Federation would be carried out as regards the States or groups of States who agree to enter the same and that provision will be made for the subsequent entry from time to time of further States or groups of States who, in the first instance, keep out of it. It appears that such a scheme should be unacceptable and would largely defeat the purpose for which it is intended. The growth of India, as a whole, harmoniously and homogeneously would appear to be the key to any useful Scheme of Federation and unless and until the major Indian States and important group of States agree to join the Federation its main purpose would remain unfulfilled to a very considerable extent. A very bare examination of the federal subjects contained in the Appendix to the Interim Report is enough to show that the scheme cannot attain any measure of real success without the major Indian States and important groups of States joining therein. For example, if some important maritime Indian States decline to join the Federation or some important

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internal States enjoying material or strategic advantage fail to join, it is not difficult to see that the federation cannot be worked to any very great advantage. It is therefore suggested that no Scheme of Federation should be accepted or consented to by individual States unless, as the result of individual consent, it is realised that the major Indian States and important groups of States consented to join therein.

In any scheme of union between the Indian States and federated British India the next most important consideration is the representation, preservation and advancement of the common interests of the federating States as a body or group and such representation of common interests and objects of the federated States cannot be attained if the individual States became individual and separate units of the new Union. Their real interest can only be advanced by creating a common organisation embracing the States, for it is only in and through such a common organisation that all questions of policy can be discussed and agreed upon and the method of achieving such a policy to be effectively pursued either in the Federal Legislature or Federal Executive. Individual direct representation of the major States may be possible in both the Lower and Upper Chamber or at least in one of them but such representation of even the major States is practically out of the question as far as Federal Executive is concerned. There is no reference in the Scheme to the advisability or necessity of such an organisation and it is suggested that without some such organisation the joining of the individual States in the Federation would, without doing them substantial good, materially encroach upon their powers and privileges. The details of such an organisation which may be provisionally called a Federation of the federating States and the mutual adjustments of powers, privileges and influence of the federating States is, in itself, a very complex problem but without the basis of some such organisation as a part of the Federal Scheme it is hardly possible to think that the federating Indian States would gain by the scheme at all. The real gain is the progress of India as a whole in which the federating States hope to participate and unless there is a common policy which can be defined by an organisation of the federating States such a

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participation is likely to be illusory. According to the Report the new State will derive its powers in part from the powers which the States will agree to concede to the Crown to be placed at the disposal of the new Federation and in part from the transfer to it of such of the powers of the Central Indian Government (and also it may be of the Provincial Governments as may be agreed to be necessary for the purpose of the Federation). This coalition of surrendered powers is undoubtedly essential but the extent of the surrender of the powers by the federating Indian States must be realised before assent is given to join therein.

As a result of the Federation there is bound to be a considerable amount of mutual repercussions on even the internal autonomy or sovereignty of the federating Indian States. One of the commonest criticisms of the scheme is that it is not possible for autocrats to federate with democrats. As an extreme criticism this aspect is put too broadly and in essence is as correct as would appear to be on its face. In the language of His Highness the Gaekwar "a unity notwithstanding diversity" is possible and advisable. While the Indian States hope to exercise the stabilising influence upon the British Indian elements in the Federal Legislatures and Executive and prevent them going too far or too quickly they must be prepared in their turn to be influenced when they in their own turn go too slowly or do not progress at all. Just as they would provide stability as the result of their prestige and traditions or the knowledge of the art of Government, the principle of self-determination for which British Indian Federation would stand for would necessarily affect the present established relations between the federating Indian States and their respective subjects. It is therefore hoped that in due course of time the scope of federal subjects would practically coincide with the central subjects of the British Indian section of the Federation and when that stage is reached the resultant effect on the position of Indian States in relation to their own subjects is not difficult to understand. These considerations are put forward not with the object of deterring Indian States from agreeing to join the Federation but with the object that if they so ultimately decide to do after balancing the pros. and cons. they must

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be fully conscious of the reactions on the Indian States and their Rulers as the result of this step.

We must turn our attention next to the type of Federal Legislature and the number of Chambers which it should consist. Apart from the considerations urged above, it must be claimed on behalf of the Indian States that they should secure equal representation with British India in the Upper House and substantial weightage in the Lower House of the Federal Legislature. This claim is founded on the political importance and sovereignty of the States. If the strength of the Federal House was 100-150 for the Upper and 250 for the Lower it would not be possible with that limited strength and limited proportion of the seats allotted to the States to secure individual representation to a large majority even of those States which are members of the Chamber of Princes to-day in their own right. Thus, though the Scheme pre-supposes Federation by States individually its representation has got to be collectively and perhaps the organisation referred to above may assist in the solution of the question though it cannot be said that it will be completely successful.

It is a lesson of history that the Federal Executive, whatever be the form or shape of Federation, has always a tendency to interfere in the international administration of the component States, and such interference is not always confined to federal subjects. In this connection, it has been said that in case of such interference the component States might seek redress from the Federal Court. But this would not be an adequate and satisfactory safeguard for the protection of their power and authority ; even in the case of the United States of America, where the constitution has set up a powerful and impartial Federal Court, there have been gradual but sure encroachments on the power and authority of the States. Similar evidence is afforded by the history of the German Federation and of the Federated Government of the British Dominions. Apart from the fact that judicial remedies are bound to be slow and expensive, it may not be possible to invoke their assistance in matters of day to day administration. Besides, such assistance may not be available in certain cases of purely executive nature. Precedents in

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support of this view are to be found in the history of other Federal constitutions. It has been argued that the Federation of all India will be of a peculiar nature and, therefore, analogies from other constitutions cannot be held applicable. It is true that different countries must have differences in their constitutions according to their peculiar circumstances, but it is equally true that the fundamental principles of Federation would apply to all equally and the constitution will have to be worked according to the established usages and conventions of Federation which have been evolved through centuries. The Scheme for All-India Federation, as it stands at present, does not provide any safeguards against such inevitable interference.

Apart from this kind of imperceptible but inevitable encroachment, the Federal Government is bound to interfere in the administration of federalised subjects in order to ensure that the States are properly and effectively pursuing the policy and faithfully adhering to the laws of the Federal Government, and thus instances of objectionable interference within the States by the Federal Executive in the guise of general inspection would become a common feature of the proposed Federal Constitution.

Moreover, the danger of such interference is sure to be much greater because, under the proposed scheme, the States, small, secluded and divided, will federate individually with British India which is, and will remain well-organised and united with its central tie intact, and with colossal resources at its command. It has been repeatedly asserted that the internal sovereignty of the States will remain unimpaired and intact under the proposed scheme, but we must not ignore the fact that another marked tendency of the proposed constitution is that the scope of Federation is so enlarged and expanded as to include subjects which are originally in the exclusive sphere of the component States. This question was discussed at some length at the last meeting of the Federal Structure Committee in London, and the definite view was expressed by some of the eminent British Indian statesmen that the time will come when the distinction between Federal and Central British Indian subjects will cease to exist. If and when such time comes, many more

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subjects might have to be federalised with the inevitable consequences that the major portion of the States will be ceded to the Federal Government and the ultimate fusion of the States and the loss of their sovereignty will be only a question of time.

Under the proposed Scheme of Federation the representatives of the States will be entitled to participate in the discussion of subjects exclusively pertaining to British India. Consequently there would be the one formidable danger of the British Indian representatives insisting on their right of intervention in the guidance and control of even the internal administration of the States. Such encroachments would be pushed further and the time would soon come when the internal autonomy of the States would cease to be effective. Therefore, let it not be forgotten that the most potent danger inherent in the Sankey Scheme is that by consenting to federate with British India, whose political traditions and ideals are totally different, the States would be compelled to suddenly adopt a form of Government which may or may not be in the least suited to their genius and local conditions.

This is by no means an exhaustive examination of the Sankey Scheme or the visualisation of its complete resultant effects, but the above examination clearly shows that the Sankey Scheme as it now stands involves serious and almost dangerous implications as regards the position and interests of the Indian States.

- (1) It will result in the creation of a new Federal State comprising British India and the Indian States and the consequent imposition of uniform nationality and double allegiance on the part of the subjects of the Indian States.
- (2) The intrusion of the legislative authority of the Imperial Parliament at least in respect of federalised subjects.
- (3) Encroachment upon or modification of the rights and powers of the Indian States and the status and dignity of their Rulers.

In the light of this expert opinion the Indian Princes and the Prime Ministers of Indian States present at this

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Conference in Bombay came to the unanimous conclusion that the Sankey scheme of Federation would result in the creation of a new federal State, comprising British India and the Indian State, and the consequent imposition of uniform nationality and double allegiance on the part of the subjects of the Indian States. Besides they were also convinced that the Sankey scheme would result in the intrusion of the legislative authority of the Imperial Parliament at least in respect of federalised subjects, and that consequently encroachment upon or modifications of the rights and powers of the Indian States, and the status and dignity of the Rulers, would become inevitable.

Therefore, the Bombay Conference of the Indian Princes and the Prime Ministers of Indian States arrived at the following conclusions :

That no scheme of union or federation should be undertaken unless the bulk of the major Indian States and important groups agree to join ; that as a necessary part of such a scheme there will have to be a Confederation of the Indian States with such powers and authorities as are necessary for the exercise of the functions allotted to the States ; that the Sankey scheme should be so modified as to obviate the likelihood of any encroachment on the internal sovereignty or administration of the respective States by the Federal Executive ; that due and individual representation should be secured to the Indian States through their Confederation in the Federal Legislature.

In this way the Bombay Conference of Indian Princes gave substance and shape to the skeleton His Highness the Maharaja of Patiala had outlined in June of 1931, when he issued his statement protesting against the scheme of Federation adumbrated during the first session of the India Round Table Conference. From then onwards the scheme of Confederation was secure. It came to have the support and allegiance of a very powerful section in the Indian Princes' camp. Moreover, since it was in the hands

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of such an able and persuasive propagandist as the Maharaja of Patiala, it was destined to beat down every opposition to it and hold the field with flying colours.

Thus, between June and August of 1931, the Maharaja of Patiala, with the support of many other Indian Princes, succeeded in creating a new situation in the destinies of the India Round Table Conference. From now onwards it was apparent that the co-operation of the Indian Princes towards the Sankey scheme of Federation would never be secured. The withdrawal of the support of the Indian Princes was a most serious and unexpected obstacle in the path of those who, at the Round Table Conference, were working for the establishment of a federal responsible government in India. Therefore, it would do a world of good if all the British Statesmen who are still inclined to favour the Sankey scheme of federal responsible government realised that the opposition to it in the Indian Princes' camp is well established and strong. Would it not be idle to deny the importance of an opposition sponsored by such leading Indian Princes as Their Highnesses the Maharaja of Indore, the Maharaja of Patiala, the Maharana of Dholpur, and the Nawab of Rampur? Would it not be futile either to ignore their opposition or to minimise its importance?

CHAPTER III

THE SCHEME OF CONFEDERATION HIS HIGHNESS THE MAHARAJA OF INDORE'S LEAD

By the time the second session of the India Round Table Conference met in London on the 15th of September, 1931, the idea of Confederation had gained immense popularity among the Indian Princes. Many of them worked out schemes embodying this idea; and during the second session of the Round Table Conference His Highness the Maharana of Dholpur, His Highness the Maharaja of Indore, and the Raja of Sarila, submitted to the Conference three separate memoranda embodying details of the scheme of Confederation. Of all these schemes the one prepared by the Maharaja of Indore was considered most satisfactory, and was carefully examined by the delegates, both British and Indian, at the Round Table Conference. The attention that was bestowed on this scheme did not surprise anyone because Indore, more than any other Indian State in Northern or Central India, has had a unique political status through its treaty rights with the British Crown, and has also enjoyed the reputation of being one of the best governed Indian States. Besides, the Maharaja of Indore, who has been ably assisted in his administration by his Prime Minister, Mr. S. M. Bapna, has enjoyed the confidence and respect of the Indian Princes, the Government of India, and the leaders of Indian political opinion in British India. For these reasons from the commencement it was obvious to all those who had an intimate knowledge of the conditions in India, that the scheme outlined by

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the Maharaja of Indore was bound to be endorsed by the majority of the Indian Princes. Moreover, owing to the thoroughness with which every detail of the scheme was worked out, it helped, more than any other scheme, to clarify the implications of the plan of Confederation.

The main features of the scheme of Confederation prepared by the Maharaja of Indore are as follows :

- I. The federating units to be (A) federated British Indian Provinces and (B) the States collectively.

The States will, with the assent of the Crown, constitute themselves into an Electoral College which may be given any suitable name, i.e. all the States will make one group or unit for the purpose of electing their quota of representatives to the Federal Legislature.

- II. Federation to be for the purposes of specified matters of common interest only.

- III. Structure and Composition of Federal Government.

(a) *Legislature.* There should be preferably only one chamber, to which representatives could be sent by the States through the Electoral College. The representation of the Indian States should be 50 per cent. If it is bi-cameral the States should have 50 per cent. representation in the upper chamber, and representation on population basis in the lower chamber.

(b) *Executive.*

1. The States need not insist on a fixed number of representatives in the Federal Executive.

2. The Executive will be responsible to the Legislature.

- IV. Method of Election of States Representatives.

The States will constitute themselves into a Confederation for the purpose of federation with British India. This will serve as an Electoral College for electing their representatives to the Federal Legislature. The Confederation will be composed of representatives of Sovereign States and of groups of the remaining states.

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Major States may be allotted a fixed number of seats to ensure their individual representation, and some regional distribution may also take place. For the purpose of election the principle of plural voting may be accepted. The number of votes allotted to a particular state depending on the state's political position, though population and income may also be given due weight.

The representatives constituting the quota of the States will represent the States collectively, and they will include among them representatives of the major States for whom seats will be reserved.

V. Federal Finance.

Federal Finance will be found from indirect taxation only, so far as at least the States are concerned.

VI. Supreme or Federal Court and Arbitration Courts.

There should be a court to deal with constitutional questions only. In case the volume of work does not justify the constitution of a permanent court, provision should be made for the constitution of a court each time an occasion arises, but the qualifications of the eligible personnel and the method of its constitution shall have to be specifically and definitely laid down in the constitution.

For disputes between the Crown and the Indian States provision should be made that they should be settled by an impartial Court of Arbitration distinctly separate from the Federal Court, the constitution of which should also be defined beforehand. The Arbitration Court should also decide disputes between a State or States and provinces *inter se*, or between a State or States and Central Government of British India. Neither the Federal Court nor the Court of Arbitration shall exercise jurisdiction as the highest Court of Appeal.

It will, therefore, be noticed that this scheme of His Highness the Maharaja of Indore differed from the Sankey scheme on the following main points, namely :

(1) That the federating units are only to be two, namely, British India and the States collectively ;

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(2) The representation of the States is to be collective and through members elected by the Electoral College ;

(3) The federal laws are to be adopted by the States and passed as their own laws, and thereafter would operate within the state territories not as federal laws but as State laws ;

(4) There is to be no new state created and consequently there is to be no question of allegiance from the subjects of the Indian States to the Federal Government as an All-India State ;

(5) Preference is shown to unicameral legislature.

The inherent merits in this scheme could be appreciated properly if it is remembered that the Sankey scheme gave rise to a number of insurmountable difficulties. First of all, under the Sankey scheme, it would be difficult to federate non-autonomous provinces with Sovereign Indian States individually as some subjects will have to remain Central. Again, under the Sankey scheme, it would be difficult to come to an agreement on allocation of seats as between British India and the Indian States, and between the Indian States *inter se*. Because on the basis of the States federating individually the smaller states could not be satisfied in the matter of representation, and yet it would be impossible to expect the smaller states to go into their respective groups at one and the same time and join the federation. Moreover, the states entering the federation at once would never be so large a percentage of the entire body of the states, and yet they would claim the full quota of representatives allotted to the states, although on the understanding that the extra seats would be released as the other states came in.

When, under the instructions from the Maharaja of Indore who, owing to an unfortunate accident, could not himself be present at the Conference, his Prime Minister, Mr. S. M. Bapna, who was attending the Conference on His Highness's behalf, explained the scheme at the plenary sittings of the second session of the Round Table Con-

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ference, Indian Princes, even those who had previously been inclined to favour the Sankey scheme, realised more firmly than before that the Indore-Patiala-Dholpur scheme of Confederation, and not the Sankey scheme, ensured their rights and privileges. It was thus that the courageous and firm stand taken by His Highness the Maharaja of Indore, and his Prime Minister, Mr. Bapna, put the last nail on the coffin which contained the petrified skeleton of the Sankey scheme of federation between Indian Princes and British Indian Provinces. From then onwards no one had any doubts that the Indian Princes would never accept the scheme of federation outlined at the Round Table Conference.

In this way even the two-party agreement that was necessary for any successful termination of the India Round Table Conference failed to be secured.

CHAPTER IV

OPPOSITION TO FEDERATION FROM BRITISH INDIA

FROM what has been stated in the preceding two chapters of this section, it is clear that the Indian Princes have rejected the Sankey scheme of federation. The leaders of political opinion in British India, too, have been repudiating the scheme. Their condemnation, in most cases unqualified, has been prominently reproduced in some of the leading nationalist journals, like the *Leader* and the *Hindu*. These British Indian critics have boldly asserted that constitutional devices like the Sankey scheme of federation only attempt to side-track the obligation of British Parliament to inaugurate and enlarge responsible government in India. In their opinion such a scheme of constitutional advance is out of harmony with the policy which they trace through the Despatch of 1833, the Proclamation of Queen Victoria, and the announcement of August of 1917.

As a sample of such fierce, hostile, and uncompromising criticism of the Sankey scheme, an article in the *Hindu* from one of its distinguished contributors, Mr. K. Vyasa Rao, is reproduced :

“ Nothing is so well calculated to make one despair of the political future of India under Great Britain as the manner in which the discussion of India Constitutional reforms has been allowed to get into that extricable thicket which goes by the name of federation. If British politicians were not as astute as they are, we could give them credit for a bona fide mistake in the art of constitution making. But being what they are, between their acuteness on the one hand

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and the credulity, at times self-imposed, of Indian politicians on the other, it is the poor man in India who has to suffer without any hope of near redemption. The proletariat seem to have no option but to exclaim: 'Enough of your constitution making; give us what we want if not in the way of self-government, in the way of honest Government.' That is what the ascendant feeling in India is coming to be now, especially after this question of federation which, making its appearance suddenly as a powerful ignus fatuus, has led the conference into a hopeless morass and has plunged the country in gloomy apprehensions.

ITS PLACE IN BRITISH OBLIGATION

British obligation towards India has been defined in three memorable acknowledgments, namely the despatch of 1833, the Proclamation of the Queen and the announcement of August, 1917. The former two have been overshadowed by the last of these which has come to occupy the place of a parliamentary bond to India. This announcement which focuses British responsibility to a definite undertaking pledged itself to progressive realisation of responsible Government in India as an integral part of the British Empire. It cannot be that by India as otherwise the British Government will have to make itself responsible for constitutional changes in the Indian States also. There was not then the remotest idea of responsible Government in India becoming ever dependent on the formation of a federal constitution so as to include the feudatory States in it. We may admit progressive realisation as against immediate realisation; we may admit India's continuance as an integral part of the British Empire, as against a breach in it. We emphatically demur, however, to the grotesque notion of responsible Government in India waiting upon a successful accomplishment of a federal structure including hundreds of Indian States ranging from less than a few square miles in area to the size of an independent prominent power in Europe.

Responsibility in the Central Government is the essence of 'responsible Government in India' as otherwise one may empty an egg of its contents and call the shell an egg.

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British politicians have no warrant to ask us to have responsibility at the centre with federation, or provincial autonomy without federation. Where does federation come in as an explicit or implied condition in the announcement of August 1917? The question of federation ought to have been ruled out of order in the Conference if the Chairman had a chart and kept to it, as an attempt to take the ship beyond navigable waters. It may be said that Dominion Status had become a formidable factor in the interval, but the realisation of responsible Government in India as an integral part of the Empire need not be different from Dominion Status if the former is made real and complete. It could hardly be maintained, therefore, that in 1917 Great Britain thought of 'responsible Government in India' only as a part of a scheme of federation. Federation has absolutely no place in Great Britain's avowed obligation to British India or to feudatory India according to any declaration of policy till now made. And yet it is looming large as a veritable rock on which the ship of responsible government is to be wrecked.

ITS INHERENT INCOMPATIBILITIES

When we come to the possibility of federation the obstacles in the way are as numerous and insurmountable as yoking a camel with a cob. Each is a good animal in its own way but between a single pair of shafts together they will draw a vehicle not for a journey but for the delectation of an audience in a Circus. In the first place is the federation to be optional or compulsory? No one has ventured to suggest that it should be compulsory and an optional federation is a wanton leap from a running train in the hope of lighting upon a cushioned cot. 'Those who want to join may join and those who do not want to join need not join' means in reality a triple constitution, one for bringing about the so-called federation, another for going beyond the federation and separately providing for all matters which affect British India alone and thirdly for the prolongation of a constitutional arrangement for those States which do not enter the federation. If an unprecedented obstacle race is to be instituted for constitution mongers this novel federation

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for India will easily take the first place. If we turn from this initial aspect to the question of the status of federating and non-federating states we shall find how ludicrous the position becomes. A federating state cannot be asked to pay a tribute to the federal government, just as a British Province cannot be asked to pay a tribute. If, again, the federal government is not to be permitted to step into the shoes of the Government of the Crown, no federation can be real. Either a State becomes a federal state and ceases to be a feudatory state paying no tribute, or it remains a feudatory state according to its treaty rights and obligations. But as the constitution is envisaged at present, it aims to be at one and the same time a federal as well as a feudatory state which is possible only by its federal or feudatory character becoming illusory. With the cessation of the tribute, its subordination to the federal government is that of a unit to the whole; and for better or worse, it must shift its ultimate dependence from the paramount to the federal power. Should this be denied, the question arises, who is to be responsible for the good government of the State? At present the paramount power is under an acknowledged obligation to the subjects of feudatory states and has exercised its prerogative of interference on their behalf over and over again, and the latest attempt to question this right met with an incontrovertible assertion of that right; and exemption from the interference of the federal government as well as the paramount power simultaneously is an unthinkable proposition. If, however, the right of the paramount power to interfere is to continue, the result will be a state of double subordination; firstly, to an agreed extent to the federal government; and secondly to the prevailing extent to the paramount power. And although we may begin by saying that the federal government shall not interfere in the affairs of the state it is only a question of time when the usurpation will begin and when it will be complete. Is freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of organisation, freedom of movement, is not all this within the federal domain? What is the good of federation, if men are not to be free within the federal area, and if the reign of law is not to prevail in it? And the federal legislature must be the source

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of this law which will displace personal idiosyncrasy. Once we allow the reign of law the goal must be responsible Government in every state, as it has come to be in British India, despite superfuge, reaction and repression. Hence the federating units, exempt from tribute, coming under the subordination of the Federal Government must approximate to the position of British provinces and will have to find that if they escape the incubus of the foreign secretary it is only to become constitutional governments. Nor can they become a menace to the safety of the federal government by employing at any time an excessive army over and above the needs of the state. And if at any stage they should like to secede from the federation should the secession be permitted or not.

As regards the non-federating states which pay a tribute now and will have to continue that tribute, into which coffer will it go? Is Great Britain to maintain a special army for the safety of these states and utilise the amount for the upkeep of the army? Again, is the benefit of those measures which accrues to the federating states as for instance in regard to a share in the profits of coinage, customs tariffs, postal profits, etc., to accrue to the non-federating states also or not? If so, where is the operative motive in favour of federation?

ITS RADICAL DEFICIENCY

It is hard to believe that the sagacious heads of political parties in England could not have perceived these and other difficulties in the way of federation; and it is equally hard to believe that this fertile idea could have emanated from them, as the best way of setting the R.T.C. on a wild-goose chase. A bare mention of the idea as an ultimate speculative possibility was made no doubt at the tail end of the Simon Report, but it was never meant that the Conference should fall to it as the one vital all-absorbing task before it on which everything else depended. If all the States had been by this time standardised in their administrative policy and methods as the British Provinces have been in desirable directions, and if the peoples in all these States had come together as effectively as the British subjects in the province had come

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together for asserting their rights, then there might be some meaning in aspiring for a federation. Even then the problems that would arise out of the attempt would well-nigh defy solution and what will emerge as the result of such an endeavour even under those conditions will be a strong centralised government with linguistic provincial areas for purely administrative purposes. For an illusive federation will be perpetually faced by prospects of secession and civil war—until they are overcome by the iron hand of a supreme federal power. We may have agreements with Governments that are independent of one another without the fetters of a federal constitution; but to go beyond and try to evolve a government of independent governments over which there will be no paramountcy even for the federal mechanism is to begin a constitution by a jumble of phrases contradicting one another and providing for a series of conflicts where nothing is certain and everything is apt to dismay the profoundest of men. We may have a federation of states in which the residuary power may reside in the state or the federal mechanism, but we cannot have a federation in which a federal member has to pay a political tribute to a federal government or is exempt from such laws as may emanate from the federal government for the recognition of federal citizenship. Nor can it avoid federal citizenship. A federal constitution means first and foremost a federal government and a federal citizenship, and if you begin the former without the latter two the constitution must from the very beginning gravitate towards the removal of the deficiency.

A POLITICAL ABORTION

The conclusion becomes irresistible that a political abortion has been brought about after inviting the R.T.C. and the occasion has resulted in an exhibition of the repellant tendencies which dominate India's claim for Swaraj."

The excerpt quoted above correctly reflects the views of the leaders of political opinion in British India on the federal scheme outlined at the Round Table Conference. Now at least it would be idle to deny that the Sankey scheme

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has received very little support in British India, and that, on the other hand, it is looked upon with grave disfavour and suspicion. Prejudice against the scheme is deep-rooted. Such an attitude was powerfully reflected in the speech delivered at the plenary meeting of the second session of the India Round Table Conference by Mr. M. A. Jinnah, who is easily the most respected political leader in India :

“ No Constitution that they framed would be acceptable to the Moslems unless their demands were complied with. I agree with the proposition that provincial autonomy and responsibility at the centre must take place simultaneously.” At the same time Mr. Jinnah could not imagine “ how they were going to complete the Federal Structure of the Government of India on the basis of an All-India Federation within any period that they could reasonably expect India to wait for.”

Later, on the 26th of December of 1931, in Delhi, Mr. Zafarulah Khan, another prominent Moslem Delegate at the Indian Round Table Conference, in his presidential address to the All-India Moslem Federation, stated :

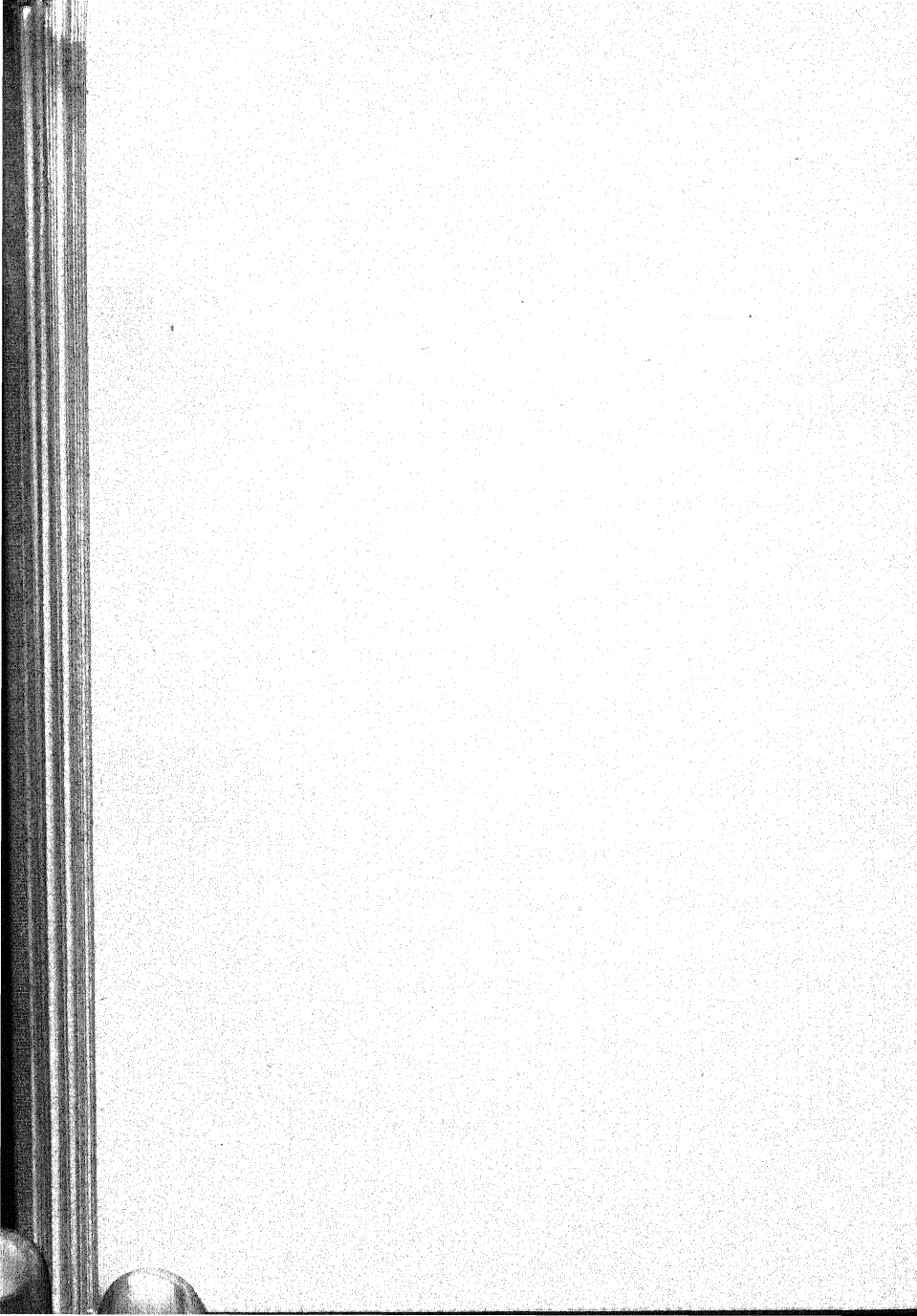
A heavy responsibility lay on the British and Indian Governments for having failed so far to face the obligation to settle the communal question. The Prime Minister must have known when he made his latest announcement that direct settlement between the communities was out of the question. Wise statesmanship would have led the Government to dictate terms of settlement in the supreme interest of India. Such decision should speedily be given.

All that has been quoted in this chapter is intended to prove that the scheme of federation between Indian Princes and British Indian Provinces worked out by Lord Sankey and his supporters during the two weeks of the India Round Table Conference, is now unacceptable to large and influential sections of political opinion in British

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India too. We may conclude, clearly and without any misgivings, that the grand achievement of the two sessions of the India Round Table Conference—the constitution of federal responsible government embracing the Indian States and British Indian Provinces—is to-day a spurned and bankrupt policy. Neither the Indian Princes nor the leaders of political opinion in British India will even consent to touch it with a pair of tongs.

SECTION THREE



CHAPTER I

RETROSPECT

ON the 30th November of 1931, in his address to the plenary sitting of the second session of the India Round Table Conference, Lord Reading said :

“ The method of this Conference, with its full discussion, its free and outspoken opinions, its friendly talks between all the members, has been, in my judgment, completely vindicated. Whatever critics—and there are many—may have to say, in my view the method of Conference has triumphed, and I hope the method of Conference will continue.”

Although these remarks elicited the approval and cheers of the Delegates present at the Conference, they could now be proved, from what has been written in the previous two sections of this book, to be a thoroughly inaccurate estimate of what the Round Table Conference was able to achieve. In the first place, the Delegates representing the various communities and interests in India could not agree among themselves on any common working proposition, and to this extent they proved that the cardinal definition of the India Round Table Conference, namely, settlement through negotiation, had failed. Delegates representing the Hindu and Moslem communities of India could not compose their own differences. If they failed to eliminate bitterness and conflict between their various interests and get upon a basis of mutual co-operation in London, which gave them the advantage of having a background of utter detachment from the pestilence of communal rancour which prevails in India, they have no hope of ever

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coming together in their own country. It may be recalled that Dr. Moonje, who represents the great political and ecclesiastical party in India—the Hindu Mahasaba—and the late Maulana Mohmad Ali, who ably represented Moslem India at the first session of the India Round Table Conference, loudly protested in the autumn of 1930 that, although the Hindu Moslem settlement could not be engineered by them in India, in the atmosphere of London, an atmosphere of political toleration and democratic equality, they would certainly succeed in composing their differences. They have had a chance of meeting in London, and they have had the opportunity of being assisted in their task of reconciliation by such distinguished British Statesmen as the Prime Minister, Lord Irwin, and General Smuts. Withal, as has been explained in the preceding chapters, the Indian Delegates failed to evolve the Hindu-Moslem and other minorities settlement. To this extent, therefore, the India Round Table Conference was an utter failure.

Similar failure has been recorded by the India Round Table Conference on another issue. The one scheme that the Delegates at the Conference were able to sketch out was a system of federal responsible government in India, both for the Indian Princes and the British Indian Provinces. But within twelve months of the scheme being mooted, the Indian Princes have rejected it. In this connection it has once again to be affirmed that simply because a few Indian Princes, in their individual capacity, still adhere to the scheme of federation, it cannot be taken that the majority of Indian Princes adhere to it. On the contrary, it has to be admitted that practically all the Indian Princes have rejected the Sankey scheme. They are of course willing to enter into a federal arrangement with British Indian Provinces, but only on their own terms. If federation between Indian Princes and British Indian Provinces is to be on the basis of Confederation of Indian Princes, it means that the very basic structure of the Sankey

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scheme is destroyed. Thus, in this matter too, the two sessions of the India Round Table Conference have ended in conflict of opinion and lack of agreement.

Even among the British Indian Delegates such lack of co-operative effort and agreement was evident. The British Indian wing at the Conference did not work as a political team aiming at a common objective. The Delegates were divided among themselves, and entertained conflicting loyalties. The Delegates representing the Hindu intelligentsia vehemently pleaded for the immediate establishment of federal responsible government in India. But Moslem Delegates like Mr. M. A. Jinnah, Mr. Zaffarullah Khan, and His Highness the Aga Khan, emphatically opposed the plea of the Hindu delegates that India was fit to work successfully a federal constitution. Such opposition on the part of Moslem Delegates to the immediate establishment of federal responsible government in India was warmly supported by Sir A. P. Patro, who earned great distinction for himself at the Conference as the able spokesman of the non-Brahmin party in India. By the time the Conference concluded its second session it was perfectly clear that leaders of Moslem and non-Brahmin political opinion in India were sharply divided from the leaders of the Hindu intelligentsia on the question of what ought to be the next advance in India's political evolution. More than this, it was abundantly obvious that the Hindus and Moslems had come to the parting of ways, and that in the coming two to three years there would be no love lost between them. Indeed, by an irony of fate the India Round Table Conference, which was intended to inaugurate communal and political harmony in India, resulted in fierce communal conflicts. No one can deny the fact that by the time the two sessions of the India Round Table Conference had concluded, the Hindus, the Moslems, and other Indian communities were antagonised more fiercely than they were before the Conference had assembled. Nothing can prove this fact more eloquently than the

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letter that was published in the press from His Highness the Aga Khan :

The position of the Moslems of India calls for examination now that the second session of the Round Table Conference has closed and the statement of the National Government thereon has been fully debated and approved in both Houses of Parliament. A survey of the kind is the more desirable since India, unhappily, is faced with the prospect of a revival of the subversive non-co-operation movement, at least in the United provinces and Bengal.

Moslem India is now at the parting of the ways. It cannot be oblivious to the fact that Moslem countries are undergoing a process of spiritual and political reconstruction. Islam is in a ferment, and Moslems all over the world are awake and conscious of the need for adaptation to the requirements of modern life. It was neither possible nor desirable for the Moslems of India, kept in touch with modern currents of thought by the close contact of their country with Great Britain and the Western World in general, to remain uninfluenced by these new conditions. On the one hand they are profoundly affected by that current of nationalism which was swept over India with a momentum and force that would have seemed impossible a few years ago. On the other hand, they are conscious of a need which in the past was but dimly comprehended—that of the preservation of their political individuality and cultural existence.

If Moslem India has not yet attained the level of political knowledge or economic influence which would qualify it to play a leading part in the shaping of the new Constitution, it has made progress at a pace surprising even to those who had formed the most sanguine estimates of its political capacity. We are now a compact and homogeneous body, united by a programme which has brought Moslems of different provinces and varying interests on to a common platform, and has provided them with an instrument for united political expression.

The All-India Moslem League, founded a quarter of a century ago, did a most useful service by training our young men in political work, and inculcating in them a deep and abiding purpose to assist the development of their community.

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It focussed the attention of the Moslem intelligentsia on matters of crucial importance to our people, and developed among them a desire for constitutional advance on sound lines. A later organisation, constituted on a different basis and doing useful work, is the All-India Moslem Conference.

Conflict between the two bodies has been avoided hitherto by the good sense, tact, and reasonableness of the leading members of both organisations. But I am confident that it is not in the best interests of the community to maintain two organisations. They should be amalgamated and together form an organisation to be called the United Moslem League Conference. I have pressed this view in a manifesto sent to India by the last air mail for publication.

The proposed amalgamation should serve to focus Moslem political thought and concentrate within itself the energy, ability, wealth, and influence of the community throughout India. I have written to my fellow-Moslems that we cannot afford to dissipate our energies at a time so critical in our history that division and disunion may ruin the prospects of a lasting settlement of the claims of Indian Moslems. I may here quote textually from the manifesto :

Islam in India can exist and advance only if and when all its sons are willing and eager to follow the lead of their political organisations. I am therefore most strongly of the opinion that Moslem leaders should immediately hold a joint meeting of the working committees of the two bodies, frame rules for a common organisation, and organise branches in every part of India. Unless we do this, we shall never be able to achieve what we have been striving so anxiously to realise. So far as the programme is concerned, there is, in my opinion, no material difference in the political purpose of either body.

The amalgamated political organisation of which I have written must not be content with a central executive committee. The work of organising branches should be taken in hand, and every effort should be made to keep in constant touch with the feeling and desires of the masses. In these days of extended franchise, work among the intelligentsia is not in itself sufficient. A centre, and possibly

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two or three centres, should be established for training young men for political work. There is urgent need also for the improvement and extension of the Moslem press.

I have expressed very decided opinions in the manifesto on a great question of procedure, of which much was heard in the closing weeks of the Round Table Conference. I have urged that the Moslems, while not abating in any way their desire for Government to implement their pledges regarding federal responsibility, should uphold the absolute necessity for provincial autonomy as an intermediate stage. Provincial autonomy was envisaged in the dispatch of Lord Hardinge's Government on the changes to be announced by the King-Emperor at the Delhi Durbar. The provinces have waited twenty years, they can wait no longer than may be required for the necessary adjustments to be made. Indian Moslems should press for this advance with all the influence at their command. Other political parties in India have been clamouring for it since the early days of the introduction of the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms. It should be emphasised, of course, that there should be no slackening of the measures to which Government is pledged for the establishment of an All-India Federation with central responsibility.

I believe the next two years will be the most critical in the history of India that we of the present generation have known. If Moslems remain solid and well organised, if they act as disciplined soldiers and follow the policy of their main organisation with cheerful zeal, they will succeed in maintaining their due position in the Indian body politic, and will play a part in the development of their country that is consonant with their great past and their present importance as by far the largest of the Indian minorities.

Such a gloomy record of achievement was, however, enlivened to a certain extent by the patriotic, strenuous, and unostentatious efforts of the Maharajadhiraj of Darbhanga and the Raja of Bobbili, who represented at the Conference the interests of Indian landholders. These two premier Indian Zamindars, in the memorandum they submitted to the Conference, clearly explained that before

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any attempt is made to 'democratise' the system of government in India, it would be necessary to incorporate in the Indian constitution safeguards not only for British interests in India, but for Indian interests as well. They urged that the Indian landholders needed safeguards which could be concretely worked out by guaranteeing to them special representation and permanent settlement. It was indeed refreshing to note that the Conference admitted the validity of this demand for Indian safeguards. Perhaps only on this question did the Conference reach an agreement without any reservation. Of course Gandhi, representing the Congress which aims at the destruction of Indian Zamindars, who form the solid obstacle in the way of Communist propaganda spreading itself in India, recorded his protest.

Gandhi's own contribution to the Conference and his attitude during this second session deserves comment. Those who, from day to day, were in close touch with all the developments of the Conference, frankly admitted that throughout the duration of the Conference Gandhi never showed any intention of offering any constructive co-operation. Neither his admirers who were responsible, even at the sacrifice of British prestige in India, for his presence at the Conference, nor those who were loud in avowing that Gandhi's political bona fides have always been above board, could persuade him to view the discussions at the Conference from the standpoint of practicability. He rejected the advice of his own followers and his British admirers, and assumed a cynical attitude to the deliberations of the Conference. Also he did not miss any opportunity of utilising his presence in London for furthering the anti-British cult of the Congress in some of the European countries supposed to be rather unfriendly towards British interests in India. Indeed this session of the Round Table Conference afforded him a political platform, but no sacred occasion when with spiritual earnestness, sincerity, and common sense, and the help of those

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privileged to participate in the Conference he might have succeeded in ensuring for the Indian masses the comfort and benefits of an ordered government.

Hence it was that barely within a fortnight after the termination of the India Round Table Conference, Gandhi from Rome stated in the course of an interview to the Italian journal "Giornale d'Italia":

"The Round Table Conference, which 'marked the definite rupture of relations between the Indian nation and the British Government', had been for Indians a long and slow agony. It had, however, served to make quite clear to the British authorities the spirit of the Indian nation and its leaders, and to ask the true intentions of England. He was returning to India in order to restart at once his struggle against England, which was to take the form of passive resistance and the boycott of British goods. He considered that the boycott would now prove a powerful means of rendering more acute the British crisis, already difficult through the devaluation of the currency and unemployment. The closing of the Indian market to all British products would signify substantially a reduction of English industrial activity, an increase of unemployment, and a new depreciation of the pound."

Mr. Gandhi concluded his remarks by lamenting that few European countries had hitherto shown interest in the Indian problem. That was a pity, since an independent and prosperous India would mean a richer market for the products of other nations, and Indian freedom would be manifested through commercial and intellectual exchanges with all countries.

Although immediately after the publication of this interview an ingenious attempt was made by Gandhi's friends to explain it away, within seven days of his return to India Gandhi assumed an attitude which had been truthfully forecast in the interview quoted above. He forced the pace of events, and after his return made it

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abundantly clear in his correspondence with Lord Willingdon, the Viceroy of India, that he had decided to revive the Congress campaign of civil disobedience, and plunge India once again in a welter of confusion, anarchy, and misery. Gandhi in fact proved to the hilt that, as far as he and the Congress were concerned, the co-operation of the British Government, as interpreted in the attitude of Lord Willingdon towards him and the Congress, was not wanted. Gandhi decided to take back India to the day when the Congress in Lahore passed its Resolution for Independence—December, 1929. To Gandhi the India Round Table Conference and the weeks following the Irwin-Gandhi pact were as if they had never been. In these circumstances, the decision reached by Lord Willingdon and his Government to arrest Gandhi along with all his principal lieutenants, and to declare the Congress an unlawful association, decisively proved that the expectations of those who had sincerely believed that the India Round Table Conference was going to ensure unfailingly the co-operation of the Congress Party were completely miscalculated.

To sum up, it will be noticed that at the beginning of 1932, that is after the India Round Table Conference has conducted its negotiations for two years, the leaders of Indian communities continue to quarrel like primitive fanatics, that the Indian Princes are distrustful of any political association with leaders of political opinion in British India, that Congress defiance of British authority in India is still unwithdrawn, that the outlook in India both for Indians and Englishmen is gloomy, and that the gloom itself is intensified by the folly of those British statesmen who still persist in seeking a novel method of approach to the Indian problem—like the India Round Table Conference.

CHAPTER II

PROSPECT

THE true version of the events that happened during the two sessions of the India Round Table Conference, which has been summarised in the preceding chapter, entitles everyone who participated to quote the famous quatrain of Omar Khayyam :

‘ Myself when young did eagerly frequent
Doctor and Saint, and heard great argument
About it, and about : but evermore
Came out by the same Door as in I went.’

This is all that there is about the Conference, which is at once the embodiment and type of the policy pursued by the late Socialist Government with reference to India. That policy has not only lowered British prestige, but it has taken India back to where she stood in 1928, when there was economic depression, absence of political objective, conflict of interests, and pious but profitless political homilies. Moreover, that policy has struck a fatal blow at united Indian Nationalism, because the two Sessions of the India Round Table Conference have now permanently divided and antagonised the Hindus and Moslems of India. From now onwards India will be a divided camp : Moslem India westward of Delhi and Hindu India eastwards. The two will never meet—at least for two generations to come. Such indeed is the tragic sequel of the policy pursued by the late Socialist Government, and endorsed by Conservative statesmen like Lord Irwin and Mr. Baldwin.

Indeed, the utter failure recorded by the two sessions of the India Round Table Conference and the condition

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of anarchy and unsettlement that promises to be present in the country as a result of Gandhi's efforts on his return to India to revive Civil Disobedience, amply justify Conservative opinion in Great Britain, giving a mandate to its representatives in Parliament to reject and repudiate the Indian policy pursued by the Socialist Government. Certainly the Conservative Members of Parliament will be rendering India a great service by repudiating that policy, because what India now needs is not novel constitutional devices, but honest administration which will restore respect for ordered government. Only when Indians once again realise the necessity and respect for ordered government will it be possible for them to assume to advantage new responsibilities and privileges.

In this behalf the policy which Lord Willingdon, the Viceroy, and able Provincial Governors in India like Sir George Stanley are pursuing at the moment, is really marked out not only with correctitude but with all good intentions for Indian advance. And it is well that everyone should remember that Lord Willingdon and his colleagues in charge of the Indian Provinces are now attempting to restore among Indians respect for Law and Order only with the intention that India's claims for assuming new political responsibilities may be strengthened. This work therefore is really more important than anything that has been attempted in India during the past five years. In these circumstances would it be too much to ask that British public opinion should support whole-heartedly Lord Willingdon and his colleagues?

Once their task has been accomplished, it will be easy for the British Government to undertake the inauguration of the next instalment of political reforms in India, which for the present, so far as British India is concerned, can only be autonomous Government in the Provinces and Dyarchical responsibility at the Centre. Such a scheme will have to be worked at least for a good many years to come, because experience gained in administering the

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Provinces can be the only passport for the assumption of responsible self-government throughout India, including at the centre. Side by side the British Government will have to help the Indian Princes and enable them to make, as the years advance, as near an approach as possible to the system of administration that exists in the British Indian Provinces. In this behalf it should be remembered that British statesmen can contribute to the contentment, happiness and progress of the Indian Princes, not by yoking them immediately to a plan of Federation with British India, but by ensuring for them a polity of Confederation which can be built on the foundation supplied by the existing organisation of the Chamber of Princes. Encouragement on these lines will afford the Princes facilities for coming together and developing a common outlook. In another direction too the British Government can befriend the Indian Princes: It can boldly set for itself the task of immediately eradicating the grievances under which they are labouring, and which came to light very clearly immediately after the publication of the Butler Committee Report (in April of 1929). Thus, in other words, Provincial Autonomy in the British Indian Provinces, and a system of Confederation of Indian Princes working on the basis of the existing Chamber of Indian Princes, could be both securely led on till the day when Federal Responsible Government for all India becomes 'practical politics'. Let not, therefore, schemes of Provincial Autonomy and Confederation of Indian Princes be rejected as half-way houses unacceptable and unsuitable to anyone.

